

Female  
circumcision  
in the U.S.

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# IN THESE TIMES

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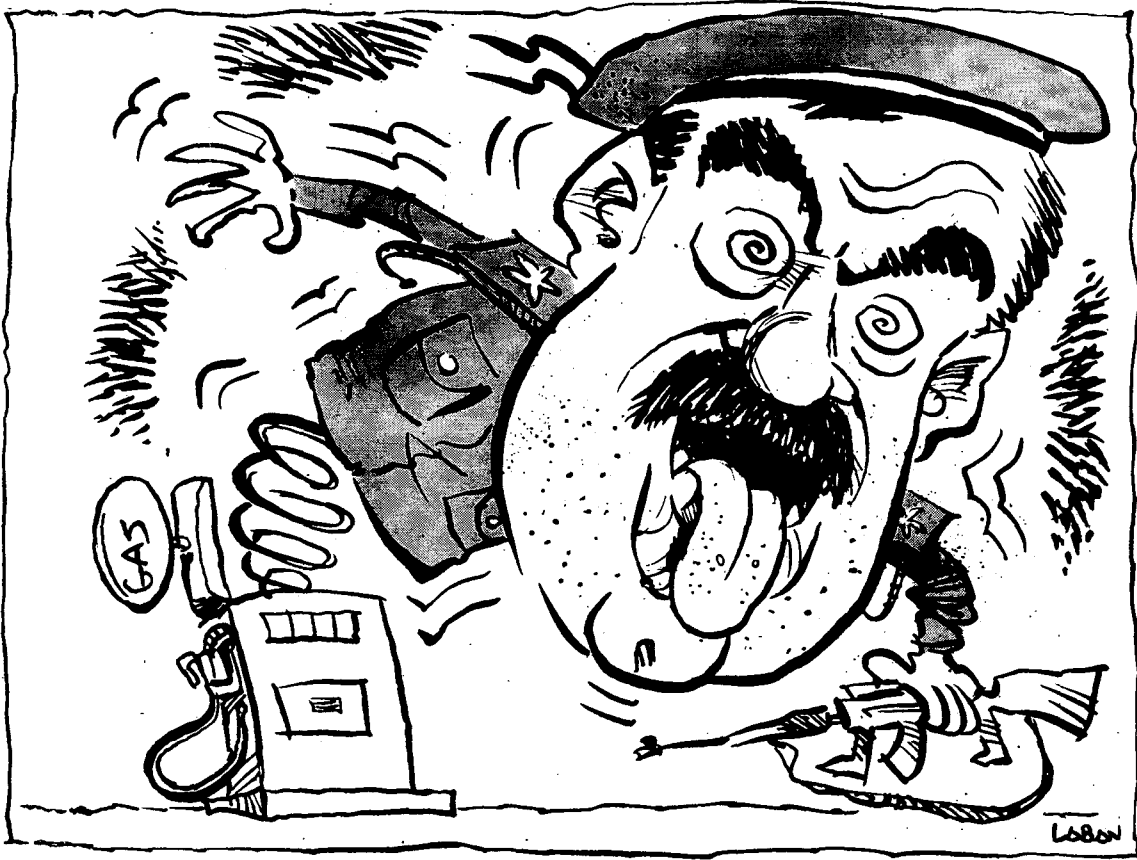
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## Redwood Riding Hoods

The Sahara Club  
takes on Earth First!

Julia Gilden reports, page 7





c 1990 Terry LaBan

# Hussein's moves raise energy security questions

By David Moberg

In Arabic, the name "Saddam" means "he who confronts." Now Iraqi bully Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait is "that which confronts" the U.S. again with a deferred choice on energy security.

While energy security will not solve the diplomatic problems posed by future aggressors like Iraq, it will lessen the worldwide political and economic ramifications. As an option, the U.S. can drill madly along California's coast, tear up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, maintain high levels of military spending and prepare to fight bloody wars in the Middle East—all of which would, at best, buy a little time and even less security.

Or it can dramatically increase the energy efficiency of the entire economy by developing alternative, renewable fuels. The second strategy could produce energy security by early next century, putting the U.S. on a course it must eventually adopt anyway. It also would bring the added benefits of dramatic environmental improvement, stimulation of new industries with great growth potential and a more competitive U.S. manufacturing position.

The Reagan-Bush decade was a time of shortsighted indulgence and refusal to plan for an energy-efficient

future. The deep recession of the early '80s, combined with the expansion of non-OPEC oil supplies and efficiency improvements in response to higher prices, helped weaken oil prices. In 1986 oil prices collapsed even further, from a high of around \$25 a barrel to a low of about \$11 a barrel. This decrease was a major factor in the extended, if erratic, growth of the economy throughout the '80s. But cheaper oil prices also halted the efficiency improvements that precipitated a 22 percent decline between 1973 and 1984 in the amount of energy required for each unit of the gross national product.

**Sticky fingers:** From the beginning, Ronald Reagan abandoned any pretense of a national energy policy, drastically cutting federal support for renewable energy. He left all energy decisions to a deregulated market dominated in the "downstream" (meaning refined products), by an increasingly concentrated oil industry. These oil refining giants were able to earn very high profits despite low crude prices. Regional suppliers of gasoline are especially concentrated, and oil companies have increasingly bought or forced out of business independent service stations in order to dominate the retail market.

Because of this concentration, gasoline and fuel oil prices have been "sticky"—or slow to drop—when crude prices decline but have risen immediately when crude prices rise. Despite record inventories and no real effect on the flow of oil beyond panic in the spot and futures markets, gasoline prices shot up 10 to 15 cents a gallon within days of the start of the Kuwaiti crisis. "It's price-gouging by the companies," argues Ed Rothschild of the Citizen Labor Energy Coalition, "simply seizing on an international event to raise prices."

A long-term perspective during the past decade would have led the U.S. to impose higher gasoline taxes, using the proceeds to invest in energy-efficiency improvements, renewable alternative-energy sources (from photovoltaic cells to solar-hydrogen fuels) and basic infrastructure—especially railroads and mass transit.

Despite great improvements in efficiency—fewer gas guzzlers and more weatherized homes, for example—the U.S. still uses roughly twice the energy per unit of GNP as its major competitors on the world market, Germany and Japan. This makes their products more competitive because less energy is used in manufacturing and because many of the products operate more efficiently.

**Efficiently independent:** Efficiency is the key to any "independence" strategy. Even pumping or discovering more U.S. oil would provide no protection, since the domestic price would rise with any disruption of world supplies (unless the government froze prices). Indeed, despite higher import levels, Europeans and Japanese are not more vulnerable to disruption of oil supplies in the present crisis, contrary to most reports. And since the U.S. is only half as energy-efficient, it is actually more vulnerable.

In addition, U.S. reserves are dwindling and becoming more expensive. An oil-import fee, compared to a gasoline tax, would mainly provide a bonanza to domestic oil producers. If the current prices stick or rise even higher, higher taxes will be out of the question for now. Although oil prices in real, inflation-adjusted terms are still much lower than in the early '80s, the shock effects will likely send the already-weakening U.S. economy into recession. It would make public sense in the long run to keep the prices up but to capture as much of the oil expenditures as possible through taxes for efficiency improvements.

In the U.S., residential (mostly heating), industrial and utility use of oil has dropped substantially since the first OPEC price increases, but transportation usage—mainly for autos and trucks—has continued to rise. Transportation alone consumes two-thirds of all U.S. oil, roughly half of which is imported.

Improving efficiency in automobiles is "where we can make the most gains the quickest," says Christopher Flavin of Worldwatch Institute. "It's where one-third of oil is used." The average efficiency of U.S.-made autos has drawn close to its competitors, but U.S. companies are ill-prepared for the future. Now, according to Deborah Bleviss, executive director of the International Institute for Energy Conservation, "the Japanese hold a commanding lead in new technologies that would improve automobile fuel efficiency. The Americans have not looked at the subject since oil prices dropped, and there's been a relaxation of fuel-economy standards," she adds. "The only time the industry did lots of innovating was when it was under regulatory pressure."

In terms of preparedness for improving efficiency, Bleviss gives Japanese auto manufacturers a 10 on a scale of one

## INSIDE STORY

to 10. She gives European companies a 7 and U.S. companies a 3 to 4. Possible innovations include continuously variable transmissions, two-stroke engines, ceramics for engines, more plastic in cars, better electronic timing and controls, direct-injection diesel engines, energy-storage mechanisms (to conserve energy lost while braking), better aerodynamic design, electronic transmissions and multivalve engines. Some of these features are already available—Volvo has produced a safe, four- to five-passenger car that can get 60 miles per gallon in the city and 70 to 80 on the highway. Some prototypes produced by Toyota and Renault are even more efficient.

**Combined energy:** Some combinations of fuel-efficiency requirements, rebates for buying extra-high-efficiency cars or for retiring old gas guzzlers, and the backup of gasoline taxes to stabilize prices could accelerate efficiency improvements. But imports or domestically assembled "transplants" of foreign companies, once again, could threaten to take advantage of the market.

In the longer term, replacing oil with another portable fuel is essential for energy security, the environment and coming to grips with the ultimate shrinkage of world oil supplies. The best prospect is solar-generated hydrogen, a clean-burning, efficient fuel that provides an ideal way of storing solar-generated energy. Mercedes-Benz has introduced a hydrogen car that uses a modified conventional engine, but it is possible to get even higher levels of energy efficiency with hydrogen-powered fuel cells.

A 1989 study for the World Resources Institute argued that, with the expected improvements in thin-film solar cells, photovoltaic-generated hydrogen would in the year 2000 be "roughly competitive with liquid synthetic fuels such as methanol from coal or ethanol from biomass, and would probably be less expensive than electrolytic hydrogen from nuclear, wind or hydropower." The report concludes that photovoltaic hydrogen "could offer an economically acceptable and environmentally benign alternative fuel beginning in the early part of the next century."

Without planning for and encouraging such an industry, however, the vulnerability of the U.S. and world economy to the Saddam Husseins of the future will only increase.

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By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON

## Bush and Japan chip away at U.S. economic destiny

**L**AST JANUARY, ANDREW GROVE, PRESIDENT OF the Silicon Valley-based Intel Corp., sent White House Budget Director Richard Darman a present: a violin. Inside the violin was a note suggesting that Darman might enjoy fiddling while American high technology burns.

These days, Darman's pizzicatos and obligatos can be heard up and down Pennsylvania Avenue. Adamantly opposed to aiding U.S. high-technology firms, the Bush administration is allowing them to be taken over by Japanese competitors. Worse still, the administration is trying to subvert Sematech, the Austin-based government-subsidized

### TECHNOLOGY

consortium that was set up in 1988 to develop new technology for manufacturing computer chips.

More is at stake than simply national pride. If the U.S. is locked out of the most advanced kinds of manufacturing, workers' standards of living will suffer and the country itself will lose control over its economic destiny.

**Sell American:** The administration hit its latest sour note on July 27, when President Bush announced that his Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S. (CFIUS) would not block the sale of Semi-Gas Systems, Inc., to a Japanese chemical conglomerate, Nippon Sanso. Semi-Gas is the world's largest producer of equipment used to purify air during the highly delicate production of silicon chips. With only one other small American firm making such equipment, Nippon Sanso and other Japanese firms can now dominate the world market.

Semi-Gas was one of 125 supply companies that support the original 14 Sematech members, which annually contribute \$100 million to match the government's \$100 million. It has been significantly involved in the consortium's research. By purchasing Semi-Gas, Nippon Sanso is, in effect, buying Sematech's research advances and eliminating any advantages the U.S. consortium had achieved over its rivals.

According to Sematech's chief administrative officer, Peter Mills, who testified August 1 before the Senate Subcommittee on Science, Technology and Space, Semi-Gas's purification capabilities increased tenfold while working with Sematech. Japanese firms now have access to this advanced technology, and Sematech must recruit and bring on line the other U.S. gas-handling firm—a process that could take six months and cost Sematech up to \$100 million, according to consortium officials.

Officials from Sematech and executives from Semi-Gas made every effort to stop the sale, but they were unable to convince CFIUS or Hercules Inc., Semi-Gas's parent company based in Wilmington, Del. Hercules had bought Semi-Gas three years ago for \$5 million. In need of cash from losses in other operations, Hercules was desperate to sell the firm, fattened by its association with Sematech, for \$23 million.

Last year, Semi-Gas management proposed purchasing the company itself in a leveraged buyout, but Hercules, whose chemical business has been suffering, rejected the offer in favor of Nippon Sanso. In January, Sam Harrell, the liaison between Semi-Gas and Sematech, wrote Hercules



Chairman David Hollingsworth offering to find an American buyer. Hollingsworth did not reply.

Last April, Turner Hasty, executive vice president and chief operating officer of Sematech, wrote Hollingsworth offering to intervene. "Sematech feels very strongly that it is against the best interest of the U.S. semiconductor industry and the nation as a whole for Semi-Gas Systems to be sold to a foreign competitor whose apparent intentions are market domination," he wrote. Hollingsworth also did not acknowledge Hasty's letter.

Then Sematech turned to CFIUS, appealing to the eight-person interagency board chaired by Secretary of the Treasury Nicholas Brady to block the sale. But in its decisions CFIUS has routinely reflected the administration's hostility to any government intervention in the economy.

**Hostility toward Sematech:** Congress established CFIUS in an amendment to the 1988 Omnibus Trade Bill. Its mandate was to block takeovers that would jeopardize "national security, essential commerce and economic welfare." Since its establishment at the end of the Reagan administration, CFIUS has reviewed 409 foreign takeovers and stopped only one—the purchase in 1989 of a Seattle airplane part manufacturer by a Chinese government company. In that case, CFIUS's action had little to do with national

security or economic welfare. Rather, it was part of the Bush administration's diplomatic maneuvering after the Tiananmen Square massacre.

CFIUS has refused to intervene in more than 30 foreign purchases of American semiconductor firms. The committee's deliberations are private, but, when pressed, administration officials argue that foreign purchases of semiconductor firms do not threaten national security. This is probably true, but these purchases certainly do threaten essential commerce and economic welfare.

The CFIUS decision on the Semi-Gas purchase also reflects the administration's particular hostility toward Sematech. Last fall the administration floated a proposal to cut Sematech's \$100 million annual funding from the Pentagon but backed down under congressional pressure. According to *New Technology Week*, a high-technology-policy newsletter, Sematech's protest over the Semi-Gas sale made the administration even less likely to block the sale.

Administration hostility stems from the ironclad opposition of Darman, White House Chief of Staff John Sununu and Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers Michael Boskin to any kind of industrial policy. While the Reagan administration favored some initiatives like Sematech on national-security grounds, the Bush administration has de-

cided that, with the end of the Cold War, the government should cease to back any specific industries. Instead, the administration favors programs that it believes will subsidize all kinds of industry together—such as the capital-gains tax cut.

Last month, for instance, when the National Advisory Commission on Semiconductors, a blue-ribbon group of corporate chiefs, began discussing a plan for the government to help set up a Consumer Electronics Capital Corporation to revive the U.S. consumer-electronics industry, the White House shot the proposal down before it had even been completed. "It is really part of an industrial policy, picking a particular industry," said White House Science Adviser Allan Bromley. "So this administration will certainly not ever support that kind of activity."

**Monitor foreign investment:** Congress is trying to force the administration to adopt a high-technology industrial policy, which would include maintaining closer surveillance of foreign purchases. Word of the Nippon Sanso purchase of Semi-Gas, which began circulating last April, spurred on these efforts.

On July 11 the House passed an American Technology Pre-eminence Act by a vote of 327 to 93. The bill boosts spending for the Commerce Department's Advanced Technology Program, which funds private companies, from \$290 million in fiscal year 1991 to \$468 million the following year. The bill's widespread support showed the unexplored potential these issues hold for political realignment. Even with the Bush administration threatening to veto the bill, 83 Republicans supported it, including prominent conservatives such as Henry Hyde (R-IL), Floyd Spence (R-SC) and William Broomfield (R-MI). The Senate approved a similar measure by voice vote last October.

Several bills are aimed directly at reforming the operation of CFIUS. Rep. Douglas Walgren (D-PA) has proposed an amendment to the Defense Production Act that would require CFIUS to investigate any takeover that involves critical technologies. It would also give CFIUS the power to require that foreign companies service American customers and maintain technological facilities in the U.S. Another bill, sponsored by Rep. Mel Levine (D-CA), would restructure CFIUS, moving it from the Treasury to the Commerce Department, which is traditionally more oriented toward protecting American business.

The legislature's efforts are being seconded by a host of industry committees. These include not only the National Advisory Committee on Semiconductors but also the Council of Competitiveness established by the Reagan administration. The council, originally set up to blunt Democratic industrial-policy initiatives, is expected to release a report late this year criticizing Bush administration inaction.

But the Bush administration is still calling the tune. It can ignore corporate committees and sabotage congressional initiatives—as it has already done with CFIUS. It can leave agencies that Congress establishes understaffed, and it can fail to spend the money that Congress appropriates. The only way to force administration action is to transform what are still technical-policy issues into political and campaign issues. That, however, takes a degree of imagination that is lacking among both Democrats and sympathetic Republicans. □

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By Joel Bleifuss

**Drug warrior to take a spill?**

Will Dan Quayle be the next casualty in the drug war—a victim to the drug hysteria engendered by his own rhetorical excesses? Convict Brett Kimberlin has filed suit in a federal court in Washington, D.C., charging the U.S. Bureau of Prisons “with a conspiracy to silence him on the eve of a presidential election.” In the weeks before the 1988 election, Kimberlin, a prisoner at El Reno Federal Correctional Institution in El Reno, Okla., went public with the assertion that he sold marijuana to then-Indiana University law student Dan Quayle a total of “15 to 20” times between 1971 and 1973.

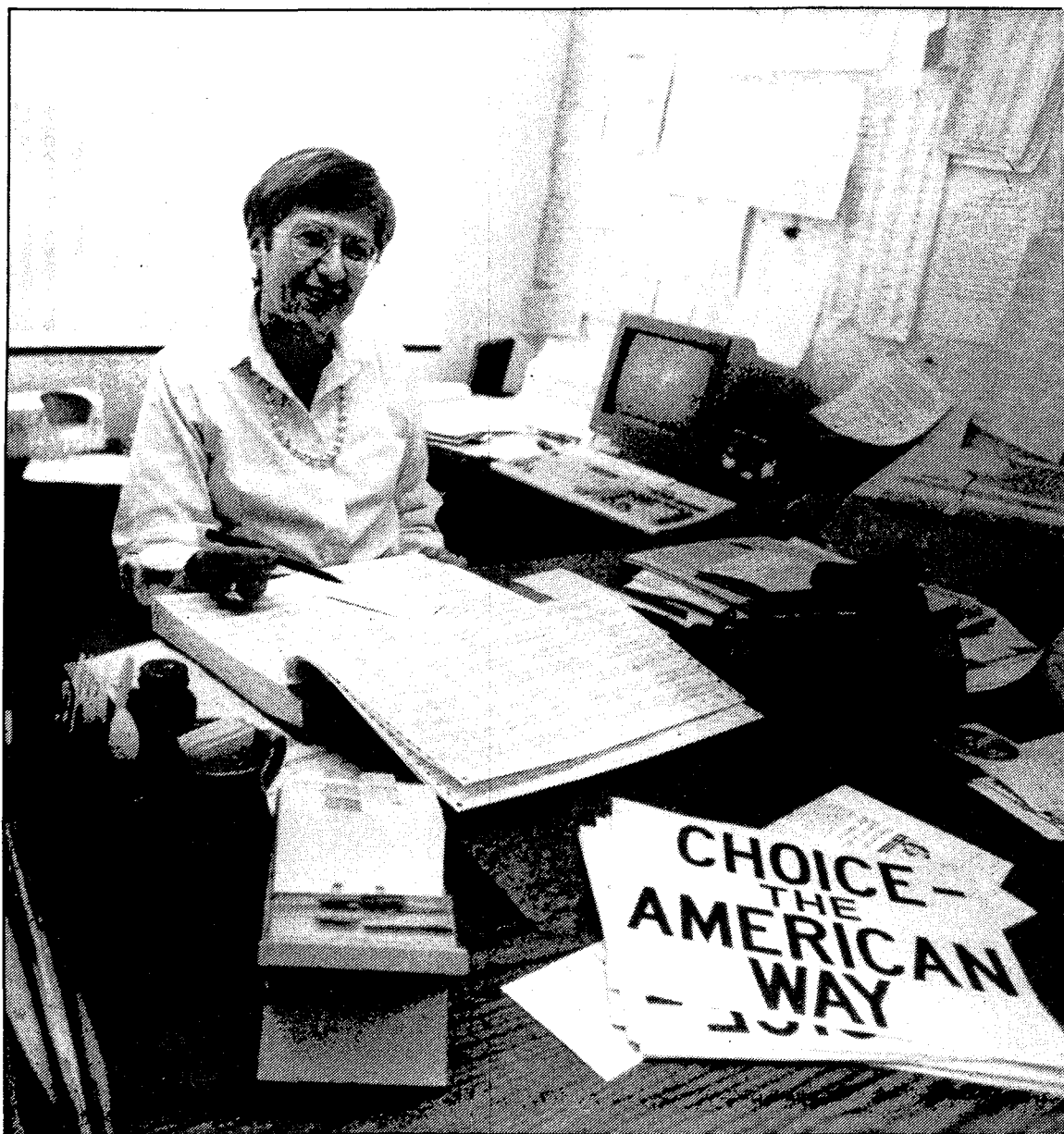
Kimberlin, 35 and originally of Indianapolis, has served 12 years of a 54-year sentence for marijuana smuggling and explosives charges. Kimberlin told WBAI radio in New York that he first met Quayle—known to him as D.Q.—at a frat party in Bloomington, Ind., where marijuana was being smoked. He related the following story: “He found out that I had marijuana available at the time. It was good quality, and he asked if I had any for sale.... I thought it was kind of strange. He looked kind of straight. I thought he might be a narc. But we talked and I felt a little more comfortable, and finally I gave him my phone number and said, ‘Hey, well, give me a call.’ He called me a couple of weeks later, and he said, ‘Hey, this is D.Q. Can we get together?’ and I said, ‘Yes. Meet me at the Burger Chef restaurant.... We struck up a relationship that lasted for 18 months. I sold him small quantities of marijuana for his personal use about once a month during that period. He was a good customer. He was a friend of mine. We had a pretty good relationship. He always paid cash.” Kimberlin went on to say that their dealings were not always contractual. “When him [sic] and Marilyn got married in 1972, I gave him a wedding present of some Afghanistan hashish and some Acapulco gold [marijuana].” For his part, Quayle insists that he has never smoked marijuana.

**Sent to solitary:** In the week before the election the El Reno Federal Correctional Institution was overwhelmed with requests by the press for interviews with Kimberlin. The prison warden allowed him to set up a press conference. Then, one hour before his meeting with the press was scheduled to begin, Kimberlin was thrown into solitary confinement on orders from Bureau of Prisons Director J. Michael Quinlan. In December 1988, Aaron Friewald reported in *Legal Times* of Washington, D.C., “Quinlan’s unusual personal involvement in Kimberlin’s treatment came amid a flurry of contacts throughout the pre-election weekend among the bureau, high-ranking political appointees at the Justice Department and senior advisers at Bush-Quayle campaign headquarters.”

Headquarters was mighty concerned. The campaign’s deputy press secretary, Mark Goodin, told Friewald that during the last days of the campaign he briefed campaign chairman—now secretary of state—James Baker III on Kimberlin’s status five times and that throughout the weekend of November 4 he kept Bush campaign chairman Lee Atwater updated on Kimberlin’s status. Goodin was also in regular contact with the Justice Department. A campaign aide who declined to be named told Friewald that the Bush-Quayle campaign was ready for damage control. As it was, none was needed.

**Too hot to touch:** In their new book, *The Media Elite*, Norman Solomon and Martin Lee chronicle how the national press decided Kimberlin’s story was not fit to print: not when he was thrown into solitary prior to his press conference, not when he was thrown into solitary a second time prior to holding a telephone news conference at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, not when *Legal Times* reported on Bureau of Prison connivance with the Bush-Quayle campaign, not when the presidentially appointed U.S. Parole Board ruled that Kimberlin would not be eligible for parole until February 1994—180 months after he first entered prison and twice as long as the 64-to-92 month U.S. Sentencing Commission guidelines for similar “Category 7” convictions. Now, more than a year and a half since Kimberlin was first thrown into solitary confinement, the major media organs have begun to pay attention to his allegations. They have also begun to cover up—through the sin of omission—certain aspects of the story. The *Washington Post*’s Michael Isikoff is one such sinner. Isikoff reported that “Kimberlin’s contacts with reporters were known to have been closely monitored by top officials of the Bush-Quayle campaign after the campaign received inquiries from several news organizations.” But Isikoff failed to mention that those top campaign officials included Baker and Atwater and that the Bush-Quayle campaign communicated its concern through the Justice Department to the Bureau of Prisons.

**Charged with conspiracy:** This recent press attention is the



Polly Rothstein in her office, surrounded by computer, printouts and files—the tools of her trade.

**Polly Rothstein: choice politicker**

By Josh Weiss

“We have turned this country around,” is Polly Rothstein’s favorite refrain. Thanks to Rothstein, the politicians of suburban Westchester County, N.Y., who once scorned a pro-choice stance as political suicide now embrace it. In a 180-degree reversal, the county now has a pro-choice majority at every level—judges, state legislators, congressional representatives. And Rothstein believes other communities across the country can create the same situation.

A lithe, intense straight talker with a passion for bird-watching, Rothstein helped found the Westchester Coalition for Legal Abortion (WCLA) in 1972 and soon took over as director. She refers to herself as a “wheeler-dealer,” not an “activist.”

From the beginning, WCLA’s mission has been electoral politics. The organization continued its work in Westchester even after the 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* decision legalized abortion. Now that the U.S. Supreme Court is dismantling *Roe* step by step, the nation’s attention has returned to abortion politics at the state level. Versions of Rothstein’s strategy—developed over the past 18 years to force local elected officials to recognize the power of the pro-choice vote—are now being used all over the country. “We are in the position that I want other organizations to be in,” Rothstein says. “We’ve changed things around; we’re a model for changing things.”

That model is based on extensive voter identification and activation, solely on the basis of attitude toward abortion rights. Rothstein argues that anything beyond such single-issue politics—she prefers the term “bottom-line voting issue”—would

destroy the strategy’s effectiveness. Besides, she adds, most politicians supportive of abortion rights tend to be liberals. WCLA has, however, backed conservative Republicans who are solidly pro-choice but hostile to other issues of particular concern to women such as health care and the Equal Rights Amendment.

Rothstein’s participation in the struggle for choice dates back to 1958. When a friend from Massachusetts became pregnant, Rothstein, just out of Skidmore College, searched for a doctor to perform an abortion and finally found one in Pennsylvania coal-mining country. “We were lucky. We got a good, safe abortion for her,” she says. “It affected me profoundly, opened my mind. I saw that women could be prisoners in themselves.”

In 1965, as a young mother living in a New York City suburb, Rothstein began volunteering once a week at Planned Parenthood’s Westchester clinic, set up just across the border from Connecticut, where birth control could not be obtained. When the New York state legislature again made abortion illegal in 1972, just two years after decriminalizing it, Rothstein and several other abortion-rights proponents founded WCLA. Although Gov. Nelson Rockefeller vetoed the recriminalization act, the legislature’s action had already underscored the fragility of abortion rights. (Out of 12 Westchester County legislators, 10 voted for recriminalization.)

“WCLA was formed in a panic reaction,” Rothstein says. “It was a rude awakening that the law we’d gotten in 1970 could be taken away.” After the *Roe* decision appeared to settle abortion’s legality, many abortion-rights advocates turned to other issues. But by making a call under an assumed name to a “right-to-life” organization to ask how she



could help, Rothstein discovered that, far from giving up, the right-to-lifers were busy devising strategies to circumvent the Supreme Court ruling. "They were passionate," recalls Rothstein. She reported back to Westchester County abortion-rights supporters that the fight was not over.

While finishing her master's degree at Columbia University Teachers College, Rothstein took over as part-time coordinator of WCLA. Until 1979 she ran the group from her house—organizing within the county and lobbying in Albany. By then, she says, "the issue had escalated. Medicaid funding, minors' rights—the efforts to erode abortion rights had all started happening." As vice president of the New York state affiliate of the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), Rothstein "learned the ropes of Washington," lobbying against the Hyde Amendment and other anti-abortion legislation.

Meanwhile, by setting up tables in shopping areas and polling by phone, WCLA was building a list of Westchester County residents who said they would not vote for anti-choice candidates. In 1984, WCLA used its computerized list to help elect two pro-choice legislators, including Democratic state Sen. Suzi Oppenheimer. Now running for her fourth term, Oppenheimer says she believes the pro-choice literature she and WCLA developed in 1984 represents the first time that the abortion issue was "used up-front" in a New York campaign.

In 1988 came the election that Rothstein refers to as "the prize, the big one" and "sweet victory." Nita Lowey, a solid, credible candidate with strong financial backing, took on a two-term incumbent with the second-largest war chest in Congress—a conservative Republican whose chief strategist was Bush adviser Roger Ailes.

Lowey ran hard on the pro-choice issue, and WCLA put its polling and pulling operation into high gear. Paid and volunteer canvassers called the 58,000 households that had been previously identified as strongly pro-choice. After reading a short script on the abortion stances of the two candidates, the canvassers asked respondents whom they would be voting for, and later followed up with get-out-the-vote calls to Lowey supporters.

Bringing 10,000 Republican and independent voters concerned about the abortion issue to her side, Lowey defeated the incumbent by 5,770 votes. "There is no question about it," Lowey said at the time. "My use of the pro-choice issue and the efforts of WCLA were indispensable." Since her election, Lowey has supported the Freedom of Choice Act, the Reproductive Health Equity Act and other pro-choice bills. And WCLA has since expanded its pro-choice voter list to represent some 25 percent of Westchester's households.

Following Lowey's election, Rothstein and Bob Fertik, a computer expert and volunteer consultant to WCLA, wrote up a 13-page description of what they called "The Pro-Choice IDEA." In their paper, which was sent out to abortion-rights leaders and the press, they argued, "The pro-choice movement will not prevail simply by lobbying, citing polls or staging demonstrations. We must focus on electoral politics." Their "IDEA": identifying, educating and activating voters who would cross party lines for a pro-choice candidate.

Six months later, in July 1989, the Supreme Court issued its *Webster vs. Reproductive Health Services* ruling, opening the door to additional state restrictions on abortion. The resulting political free-for-all has helped bring to power pro-choice Democratic governors Douglas Wilder of Virginia and Jim Florio of New Jersey, but it has also brought stiff anti-abortion legislation to Guam, Pennsylvania, Idaho and, most strikingly, Louisiana.

In the battle to create and maintain pro-choice legislatures, Pro-Choice IDEA has played an important role. "We modeled our concepts on some of

the things Rothstein had done," says Terry Cosgrove, executive director of Personal Pac in Chicago. Within months of *Webster*, Personal Pac had raised \$200,000, enabling them to launch a Pro-Choice IDEA-type primary campaign against state Rep. Penny Pullen, a right-wing anti-choice Republican. That election resulted in a tie vote that was decided by a coin toss which Pullen lost.

In Southern California, the efforts of a coalition led by the California Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL) helped elect two pro-choice candidates—a Republican and a Democrat—in tight races. "Pro-choice activists delivered the elections," says Robin Schneider, executive director of CARAL-South. Schneider adds that WCLA provided her with "a critical piece of information"—how to set up an independent expenditure campaign. "It's an arcane point," she says, "but it made a big difference to our efforts."

Prior to *Webster*, however, Rothstein and Fertik had little success convincing national abortion-rights groups of the importance—and winnability—of state political races. While Rothstein is hesitant to discuss the difficulty she has had getting national organizations to consider Pro-Choice IDEA, Fertik says he and Rothstein got the cold shoulder when they went down to Washington in March 1989 to present the concept. Fertik, president of a new group called Democrats for Choice, says that in Washington Lowey's victory was ascribed to her opponent's late-breaking financial scandal. "They didn't believe that pro-choicers would vote the issue," he adds.

"Washington is a very unreal place," Fertik says. "It's not a place that understands grass roots. Over the years, the pro-choice movement had become very involved with Capitol Hill, with Washington. They had lost sight of state politics—and in this country, state politics is everything."

Ellen Carton, executive director of New York state NARAL, argues that Rothstein's Pro-Choice IDEA is nothing new. "This kind of work has been going on for years and years," Carton says. "That's what field canvassing is all about. [Rothstein] picked up on what people have been doing for years and made it more sophisticated, specifically by targeting Republicans and independents. What she did was definitely innovative, though not novel."

"They [WCLA] helped elect Nita Lowey through their efforts," says Renee Cravens, a NARAL spokesperson in Washington. "They are a very positive force, an extremely positive influence. But the *Webster* decision itself transformed the way voters look at the issue."

Rothstein says only that for many years hers has been "a voice in the wilderness." She emphasizes the contributions of all the national groups, but she does add that "some people don't want to give credit to other groups." Now, she and Fertik have expanded their original Pro-Choice IDEA paper into a 125-page manual, *Pro-Choice Power: How to Turn Pro-Choice Supporters into Pro-Choice Voters and Transform American Politics*, and WCLA has established the Pro-Choice Resource Center with a full-time staffer.

The fight in WCLA's home county has essentially been won. Pro-choice majorities are solidly in place, and the remaining anti-choice Westchester County politicians are "switching sides, running scared or waffling," Rothstein says. Although the pleasure of defeating "these misogynists" remains, it is the new resource center that Rothstein says renews her energy after 25 years in the pro-choice struggle. "I want to see lots and lots of strong pro-choice organizations with politically savvy leaders," she says. "We have to play that game; we have to win that game."

Josh Weiss is a Brooklyn-based writer and researcher.

result of a suit Kimberlin has filed in federal court charging the Bureau of Prisons with conspiring to violate his First Amendment right to free speech. Kimberlin is being represented by two lawyers from the prestigious Washington law firm of Arnold and Porter, which has taken his case pro bono. A legal brief filed by Arnold and Porter lawyers states, "Evidence obtained under the Freedom of Information Act and elsewhere reveals that the true purpose of [Bureau of Prisons Director] Quinlan's order was to put a halt to Kimberlin's serious charges against the vice presidential candidate during the critical final days of the 1988 presidential campaign. ... Kimberlin was placed into solitary confinement for the purpose of silencing his statements regarding a candidate for high public office. A clearer First Amendment violation has never existed." Kimberlin spoke with me about his case from the federal prison in Memphis where he spends his time lifting weights and studying law books. "I'm always hopeful," he said, "but I'm also a realist. I realize that the government doesn't like to admit that they ever erred, so I think it will be an uphill battle. But with Arnold and Porter involved in the case, the press now knows I'm not some fruitcake trying to make headlines from prison."

**Kimberlin's convictions:** In 1979 Kimberlin was sentenced to four years for marijuana smuggling and 50 years for his alleged involvement in a series of bombings in the Indianapolis Speedway area in 1978. Kimberlin admits he was smuggling marijuana but has always denied he was involved in any bombing—refusing a plea bargain that would have led to a five-year sentence on the bombing charges. Kimberlin tried unsuccessfully to appeal his bombing conviction to the Supreme Court, represented pro bono by Erwin Griswald, former dean of Harvard University Law School and solicitor general to Presidents Johnson and Nixon. Griswald told journalist Norman Solomon that while he knows nothing of Kimberlin's alleged dealings with Quayle, he does think highly of the young man. "I always found him to be honest and straightforward in my dealings with him," said Griswald. Kimberlin was convicted of the bombing by testimony from witnesses who identified him from a photograph they were shown while under hypnosis. Griswald's appeal to the Supreme Court challenged the veracity of the testimony. "We think that with hypnosis there is a tendency of the witness to say what the inquirer wants, and that the inquirer might influence the witness, and this influence may persist after the period of hypnosis," said Griswald. "We believed that this may have been true in this case. ... There was no clear evidence against the client otherwise."

In saner times, a story about Quayle's alleged use of illicit substances would have the same journalistic merit as, say, a piece about a presidential mistress. But the Kimberlin case raises questions about the misuse of political power. Furthermore, the Bush-Quayle administration, having enlisted the dominant media in its propaganda efforts, has engaged the nation in a demagogic anti-drug crusade. Consequently, the etiquette that would normally leave the private vices of public figures alone is not relevant.

**Drug-war "hypocritter":** One favorite tactic of demagogues is to rewrite history to conform to their propaganda. Forgotten in the drug crusade is the March 1977 *Fort Wayne* (Ind.) *News-Sentinel* story that quoted then-U.S. Rep. Quayle as saying that Congress should take a "serious" look at decriminalizing marijuana because penalties for possession were too severe. Repeating that assertion in April 1978, Quayle added that he supported decriminalization of marijuana for first-time users. Ignoring the public record, the vice president's spokesmen deny that he has ever supported decriminalization of marijuana. Also missing from Quayle's official history is mention of his attendance at a party known as "The Trip." According to the 1969 *Mirage*, the De Pauw University yearbook, Quayle and his brothers in Delta Kappa Epsilon held a fall dance—"The Trip"—that provided partygoers with "a colorful psychedelic journey into the wild sights and sounds produced by LSD." *Mirage* reported it was the first party the fraternity had held without the supervision of a housemother. A former college mate of Quayle, who asked not to be named, told Doug Hissom of the Milwaukee weekly *Shepherd Express*, "LSD was not served directly by the fraternity, but it most certainly would have been taken by the members."

**A twist to the story?** There is speculation from reporters following the Quayle-Kimberlin saga that some members of the Bush team might not be adverse to Quayle getting mired in a drug scandal. The reasoning goes that if Quayle takes a fall, it would then be possible to replace him with a more moderate and politically electable Republican, such as Secretary of State James Baker. Such a move would be possible if Baker changed his Texas residency to meet the constitutional requirement that the president and vice president hail from different states. For their part, the Republican right-wingers that Quayle represents would be powerless to protest, since, as they have repeatedly maintained, using drugs is one of the most sinful things a person can do.



## Thinking globally

In the face of an upsurge of anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, for the first time in more than 50 years Jewish languages, history, literature and culture will be studied at a Soviet university. In cooperation with the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS) and the New York-based YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, the Moscow State Institute of History and Archives (MGLAI) will sponsor a Jewish studies program beginning in the fall of 1991. According to David Fishman, a JTS professor and founder of the program, the MGLAI faculty has been at the "forefront of the movement for democracy and is outspoken in its condemnation of anti-Semitism." Each year, teams of professors from JTS and YIVO will teach in Moscow alongside Soviet faculty, and Soviet students will spend one year studying in New York.

## Acting locally

The Piedmont Peace Project, a "stunningly effective" multiracial network of mill and textile workers, farmers, teachers and other rural people from North Carolina has been named recipient of the 1990 Grassroots Peace Award. Since 1985, the project has registered more than 10,000 rural voters and brought nearly 60,000 to the polls. The project also played a crucial role in the nomination of Harvey Gantt—the first black Senate candidate in North Carolina this century. Gantt faces Sen. Jesse Helms in November. "Klan violence, intimidation at voter-registration sites, illegal polling practices and punitive workplace firings have failed to slow the growth of the [project's] movement," notes the Peace Development Fund, which awarded the project \$10,000 toward its 1990 get-out-the-vote campaign.

## Dousing discontented flames

Those who burn the flag in China may not be so lucky as those who burn it in Texas. China's first National Flag Law, approved June 28 by the National People's Congress Standing Committee, forbids the use of the flag in advertisements or as a trademark and states that those who deliberately insult, burn or deface the flag will face "punishment." The law, which will go into effect October 1, is aimed at strengthening the Chinese sense of statehood and patriotism, says the *Beijing Review*, and requires that the flag be raised every day at Tianamen Square and all political headquarters.

## All crime and no punishment

During the last 20 years, only one employer has gone to jail for safety violations that caused a worker's death, according to *Criminal Job Safety Prosecutions: Lessons Learned, Prospects for the Future*. Released by the National Safe Workplace Institute, the report criticizes the federal government for lagging behind states in criminal enforcement in the workplace and for giving environmental-crimes prosecutions greater priority than job-safety criminal prosecutions (see *In These Times*, May 23). The report comes as the Senate is debating legislation introduced by Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-OH) that would increase prison sentences for workplace-safety crimes from six months to 10 years and would make it possible for employers to be charged in cases not involving deaths.

## Charge it

An 11-year-old boy who publishes an environmental newsletter says it worries him that MasterCard recently issued him a gold card with a \$5,000 credit limit. Tommy Mullaney, publisher of the bimonthly *Pollution Solution* in Crownsville, Md., filled out the MasterCard application before he went to summer camp. He stated his birthday, Nov. 10, 1978; occupation, student and publisher; and income—\$5 a week allowance. "I'm very scared about how safe my money is right now if they are giving it away to kids like me," said Tommy, whose mother immediately canceled his credit line.

## David Goldway

David Goldway, editor and scholar, was killed in an auto accident July 24 on Cape Cod. Goldway, 83, was a founder and longtime editor and editorial board chairman of the Marxist quarterly journal of politics and economics *Science and Society*. During the '40s and the '50s, Goldway was a teacher and chief administrator of the Jefferson School of Social Sciences in New York City. He also co-edited two collections of classical Marxist writings and taught English literature at the City University of New York.



Darrell Murphy poses with his \$6,000 solar-powered Sun Driver in front of the United Nations.

## The era of the 'green machine'

NEW YORK—The Lightwheels Festival, a nine-day exposition of innovative "green machine"-era vehicles traveling from Washington, D.C., to New York City delighted, intrigued and educated the general public late last month with an array of human-, electric- and solar-powered vehicles. "Given the gravity of environmental problems like air pollution, global warming, noise and traffic congestion, we cannot afford to ignore the fact that gasoline- and diesel-fueled cars, trucks and buses are leading

causes of these problems. We need alternatives, and we need them now," said Steve Stollman, director of Lightwheels, Inc., a non-profit agency that promotes alternative modes of transportation.

Solar-powered vehicles are one of the alternatives. They get their power from photovoltaic (PV), or solar, cells, which convert sunlight into direct electrical current. Purely solar-powered cars use only PVs to power the motor and recharge the batteries, while some cars also allow for back-up recharging from regular electrical outlets.

Such vehicles come primarily from university engineering stu-

dents and entrepreneurial builders such as Darrell Murphy, designer/builder of the solar-powered commuter car Sun Driver. Murphy, a full-time engineer for the Tennessee Valley Authority, built his first solar vehicle 15 years ago as a high school student because "there had to be some alternative to petroleum-based transportation."

—David Vita

Lightwheels is sponsoring a high school competition for human-, electric- and solar-powered vehicles. For more information, write or call Lightwheels, 49 E. Houston St., New York, NY 10012, (212) 431-0600.

## U.S.-Mexico 'free trade'—but for whom?

MEXICO CITY—The June announcement by President George Bush and Mexican President Carlos Salinas that they intend to negotiate a so-called "free-trade agreement" (FTA) has sparked angry opposition in both countries because of the effect it would have on workers and their communities.

After meetings in Washington involving government and business leaders—but not worker representatives—from the two nations, the two presidents directed their staffs to begin planning negotiations on the removal of most obstacles to the movement of goods and capital across the border.

"We are already living with free trade, although there hasn't been a formal treaty with that name," said Raul Escobar, leader of the Mexican Ford Workers Democratic Movement. "What it means is that the companies have the freedom to have plants in Mexico without real unions, without paying decent wages or fair taxes and without protecting our health and safety or the environment. The workers have the freedom to work for almost nothing. And workers in the U.S. have the freedom to lose their jobs."

An FTA is strongly supported by

most large corporations in the two countries. American transnational companies want to be able to move more of their U.S. and Canadian operations to Mexico—where workers typically make between \$3.75 and \$10 per day—and then import finished products to the rich U.S. market. Major Mexican companies also want greater access to U.S. consumers.

Already, hundreds of thousands of U.S. workers have become unemployed as corporations have shifted plants to Mexico. After the Mexican oil company Pemex, the three largest exporters of goods from Mexico to the U.S. are now Chrysler, Ford and General Motors, with IBM and Celanese not far behind.

Millions of workers whose jobs have not been moved have been pressured to accept lower pay and benefits in order to "compete" with conditions in Mexico. Lost jobs or lower pay levels in the private sector have in turn reduced the tax base in many communities, affecting public services and public-sector jobs.

Within Mexico, anti-labor policies, which are an important part of the strategy of attracting U.S. corporations, have meant increasing poverty for Mexican workers. A wage-control program has helped cut workers' buying power by more than half in the past eight years. Strikes are often ruled illegal and meet with violent repression. Since 1982 the percentage of the gross national product

that goes to Mexican wage earners has dropped from 41.7 percent to 27.7 percent, while the percentage that goes to owners of capital rose from 48 percent to 65 percent.

Cuauhtémoc Cardenas, leader of Mexico's opposition Party of the Democratic Revolution, argues that progressive forces in the two countries should push for economic policies based on raising Mexican workers' standard of living. If companies operating in Mexico paid enough so that workers could buy what they and American workers produce, jobs and local economies would be more stable in both countries.

Such a strategy would obviously require increased support for Mexican workers trying to create strong, independent labor unions, a fact that creates a dilemma for free trade's most visible critic in the U.S.—the AFL-CIO. The labor federation and many of its affiliates have historically supported the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM), which is allied with the ruling party and which actively sides with transnational corporations in labor disputes. In recent months the CTM has even recruited strikebreakers when its members have demanded democratic representation and fair treatment from management. CTM chief Fidel Velasquez has said he has no objection to a free-trade agreement because he "trusts President Salinas" to keep workers' interests at heart.

—Matt Witt



By Julia Gilden

**A** REACTIONARY DIRT BIKERS' CLUB BASED IN Southern California has called on its members to "talk some sense" into the leaders of Redwood Summer, Earth First!'s two-month-long protest against the timber industry.

Sahara Club founder and senior editor for *Dirt Biker* magazine Rick Sieman, who calls his organization a "direct reaction" group,

## ENVIRONMENT

admits that eradicating Earth First! is part of his agenda on fighting for dirt bikers' rights in the desert wilderness. Sieman says his hatred for Earth First! began three years ago when his son was in a biking accident during which he could have been decapitated by a piano wire strung between two Joshua trees in the middle of the southeastern California desert. He says his son saw the wire and avoided it, but that the two trees the wire was strung between had "EF" written on them in orange paint.

Jim Dodson, chairman of the off-road-vehicle committee for the Southern California branch of the Sierra Club, questions Sieman's story about his son's accident. "People [like Earth Firsters] aren't going around stringing wires between trees unless it's on their own property and they have had problems with trespassers," he says.

Dodson, a former Earth Firster who now works as a budget analyst for a government contractor, says Earth First! developed as a reaction to oil and timber consumption and rampant subdivision sprawl in the Sunbelt. But, he adds, the organization's days of direct-action tactics are long past.

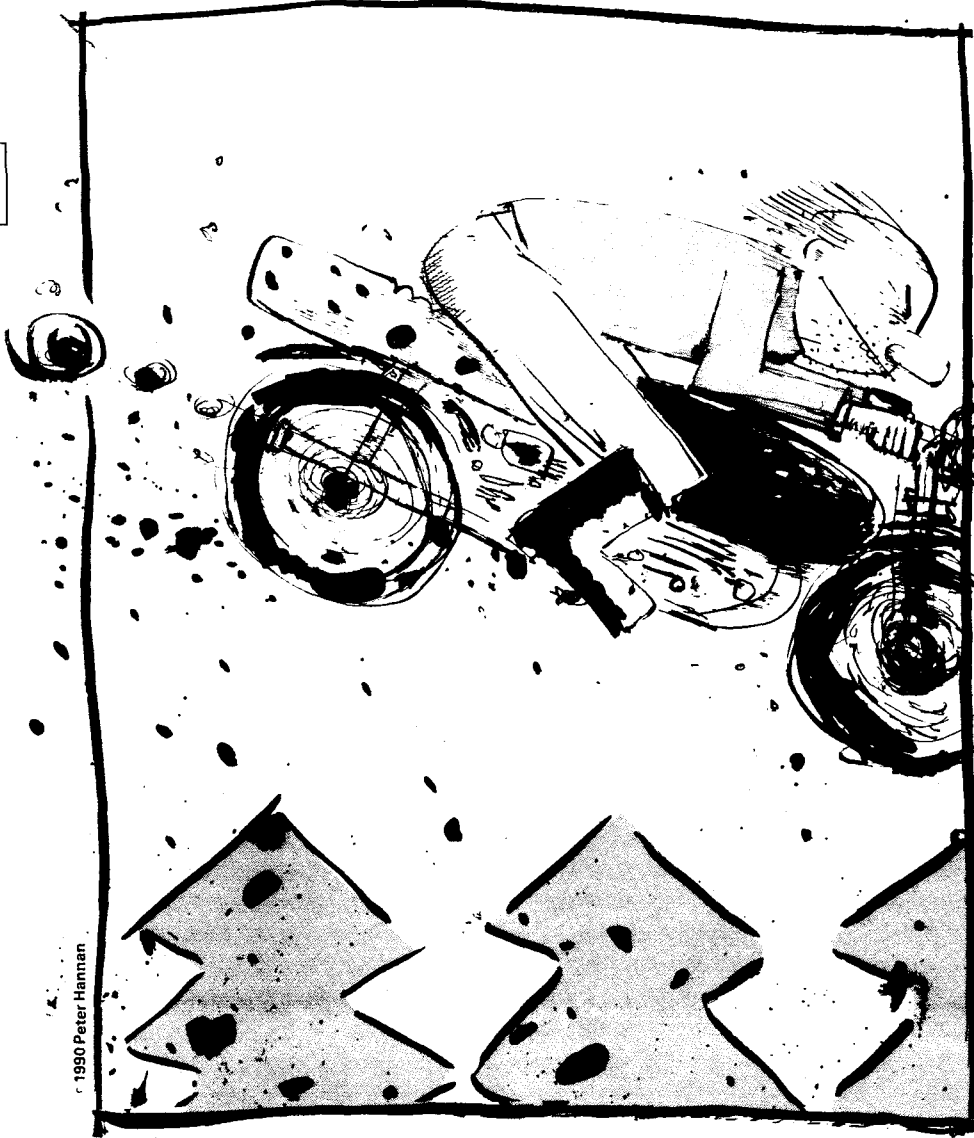
Earth First! co-founder Mike Roselle says his group's offices in Northern California have received threatening letters in recent months signed "The Stompers" and "The Committee for the Death of Earth First!," and that some of the letters contain rhetoric strikingly similar to that in newsletters distributed by the Sahara Club.

According to Roselle, Earth First! has a policy of not claiming responsibility for destructive acts against property that any members might engage in. Roselle, who admits to an Earth First! philosophy of direct action against property (but not people), says the usually highly publicized actions have been designed primarily to focus media attention on environmental abuses. He says that, unlike the Sahara Club, Earth First! has never endorsed violence against people and that in recent years "Earth First! has grown up. We've moved away from direct action and redefined ourselves more as a civil-disobedience group."

**Paying the piper:** While Sieman acknowledges that the language in the Sahara Club's newsletters, distributed to about 5,000 members, is hate-filled, he claims the club does not endorse violent action among its members.

But Sieman's threat to Earth Firsters in a recent radio broadcast seems to support Earth First!'s claim that its members have been targeted for physical violence by the organization. "We're letting people know who and where you [Earth Firsters] are," said Sieman on KFI-AM's "Joe Crummey Talk Show" in Los Angeles. "And if they take some appropriate action and if it scares the living hell out of you, then it's time to pay the

# Dirt bikers' treadmarks on road to Redwood Summer



piper."

Producer Eric Braverman said the June 28 radio show, which pitted Sieman against Earth First! spokesman Mark Williams, came about as a result of the many hate calls he received from Sahara Club members after an earlier interview with Earth Firster Peter Braveler.

Braverman said the confrontation between Williams and Sieman—during which each claimed the other's group to be a menace to society—produced the highest

volume of phone calls the show has ever had from members of each organization. "I've never seen two groups that hated each other more," said Crummey, whose show is broadcast throughout the western U.S. and as far east as Chicago.

"People in Earth First! are the leftover shreds of humanity, with a high percentage of homosexuals," charged Sieman during the show. Sahara Club members who infiltrated Earth First!, he added, found a bunch of fumbling anarchists. Williams responded that because Earth First! is more of a movement than an organization, infiltration is no feat. He accused Sieman's organization of abusing wilderness areas and added that the Japanese, who export dirt bikes to the U.S., don't allow them to be used in Japanese wilderness.

**Moderate counterparts:** The Sahara Club is to the American Motorcycle Association (AMA) what Earth First! is to the Sierra Club: each organization believes it has a better chance than its moderate counterpart of bringing about change via anti-social tactics.

Sieman says his club wants to keep public lands open to recreational bikers. Rick Hammel, who coordinates the AMA's activities in the eastern California deserts with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the government agency that oversees wilderness areas in the West, agrees with Sieman's concept, but he says his club advocates fighting land-use restrictions through state and federal lobbying efforts. Hammel says the Sahara Club is not recognized by the AMA—

Sieman calls the AMA "a bunch of wimps."

Since it was founded three years ago, the Sahara Club claims to have gained support from about two dozen motorcycle stores, mail-order businesses and racing organizations. Members are motorcyclists and all-terrain-vehicle users from all over the country, with the majority living in Southern California, according to Sieman. He says a select group of "big, ugly desert racers" forms a kind of elite strike force within the club and that they are "ready to go anywhere and do whatever is needed to the enemy."

Sieman says the Sahara Club was originally formed to battle Senate Bill S11, which, if passed, would designate large portions of the Californian deserts as wilderness areas off-limits to vehicles with wheels. Sieman says bikers are unpopular with the BLM; the Sierra Club; the Audubon Society; and Sen. Alan Cranston (D-CA), the author of S11, as well as with Earth First!.

While Sieman denies he might be inciting Sahara Club members to retaliatory acts for alleged infringements against dirt bikers, his newsletter urges members to "kick some ecosuckfaces."

**Firing loose cannons:** Both Roselle and Sieman admit that the types of actions each organization endorses have the potential to attract "loose cannons," who might, with the tacit approval of the organization, engage in destructive acts that would be supported by the organization's philosophy if not acknowledged by the organization.

The last loose cannon Earth First! attracted turned out to be an FBI agent.

According to Dodson, Earth First! founder Dave Forman is busy these days defending himself against FBI charges that he conspired to blow up power lines in Arizona—charges that even FBI agent Mike Tait says were brought mainly "to send a message" to environmentalists with subversive ideas. Forman says he was set up and merely gave money to the undercover FBI agent who said he was planning an unnamed "ecodefense project."

Roselle says Earth First! does give money to groups and individuals for environmental actions, doesn't ask too many questions and doesn't really want to know how the money is spent. Sieman says he feels roughly the same about how Sahara Club members interpret his newsletters. According to Dodson, Sieman doesn't fully comprehend the potential for violence among Sahara Club members.

Dodson says he thinks both groups have in common a vision of an anarchistic, stateless society. Their notions about how land should be used, he adds, are fundamentally different. Earth First!'s mission is to defend land against human domination, opposing the Sahara Club's contention that land exists for humans to use.

"Both use their own versions of direct action, which can be compared to a vigilante posse concept that has been lurking for years in the extreme right," says Dodson.

Early Earth Firsters came out of a right-wing background, adds Dodson. "They weren't pacifists. They were more western Ed Abbey types, more rugged individuals."

Another similarity Dodson sees between the two groups is an aversion to big government and to social, communal problem-solving. "They both have predator mindsets, but Earth First! happens to believe in protecting land," he says. According to Dodson, the Sierra Club approves of Earth First! as a force to the left

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of the mainstream environmental organization. "But their cavalier attitude has led to a vendetta against them by the Sahara Club,"

he adds.

While Sieman maintains his organization commits no violent acts, new member Scott Troser says he was surprised to find the club

newsletters so full of vitriol and no longer shows them to potential members. He says his next dues contribution will be to the AMA instead, where the fight to keep public lands

open will be fought the slow way—through the legislature and in the courts. ☐

Julia Gilden is currently a reporter for the *Imperial Valley Press* in El Centro, Calif.

## It's not easy being green: feds blind to reactionary hate crimes

Environmentalists who once joked about reactionaries declaring "open season" on them now charge that an increase in crimes of property destruction and threats of personal violence by right-wing extremists is being met with lax investigation by law-enforcement officials.

Citing the apparent failure of local police and FBI agents to vigorously and fairly pursue investigations of crimes against environmentally aligned organizations and individuals, coalitions of environmentalists have begun forming to demand reliable public protection against hate crimes.

Shortly before Earth First!'s "Redwood Summer" protest began in Northern California to denounce resource-depleting logging practices, organizers Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney were victims of a planted pipe bomb that left Bari severely wounded (see *In These Times*, June 6). Earth First! co-founder Mike Roselle said he was not surprised at the FBI's conclusion that the Earth Firsters must have bombed themselves, since the organization has learned to expect little law-enforcement protection or prosecution for hate crimes against environmentalists who have come to be regarded as subversive by the government.

Instead, environmental groups are banding together to mount their own investigation of the bomb that exploded in

Bari's car in June in Oakland. Acting on behalf of Earth First!, Greenpeace has hired a private detective to investigate the case further.

Last month, a coalition of 50 environmental organizations and California legislators formed a committee calling for a congressional investigation into the FBI's attempt to "blame the victim." The coalition list, which reads like a who's who of environmental and civil-rights guardians, includes: Greenpeace, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), SANE/Freeze, Earth Island Institute, International Indian Treaty Council, COINTELPRO Survivors, California Democratic Party Central Committee, Third World Network, Green Party Organizing Committee of California, Rep. Ron Dellums (D-CA) and California state Assemblyman Tom Bates.

A separate demand for a congressional investigation into the Earth First! incident was made in July by the big five—the Sierra Club, the National Wildlife Federation, Friends of the Earth, the Audubon Society and the National Parks and Conservation Association.

The unwillingness of law-enforcement agencies to thoroughly investigate crimes against environmentalists may directly contribute to a rise in hate crimes against organizers in other parts of the country, say members of allegedly targeted organizations.

The office of University of Oregon American Indian professor Rob Proudfoot was blown up with a pipe bomb last spring, according to Doug Norlen of the Wilderness Council. He says an Aryan Nations white-supremacist group is suspected by local environmentalists of planting the pipe bomb because of that group's objection to Proudfoot's course syllabus covering "multicultural links to environmental issues."

"Furthermore, we are convinced the skinheads in Oregon have a regional network, like the Aryan Nations white supremacists," adds Norlen. "We are expecting them to step up actions against environmental groups as well."

Norlen expects no protection from the establishment. "Sen. [Mark] Hatfield [R-OR] gets into such tirades against environmental groups that it lends support to an anti-environmental mentality," he says. "It creates a climate that gives permission to violent extremists to do anything they want with little chance of being pursued by the law."

Rob Anderson, assistant editor of the *Anderson Valley Advertiser*, a progressive weekly in Northern California, says his newspaper's office was broken into and printing equipment was smashed last year. "Law enforcement is slack in the

county," he says. "There was no investigation and no prosecution. It gives vigilantes permission to go ahead."

According to Anderson, the original name for Redwood Summer was "Mississippi Summer in the Redwoods," chosen because of similarly relaxed law-enforcement investigations of vigilante hate crimes against blacks in the South in the '60s.

Norlen says a rise in right-wing extremist activities against Earth Firsters coincided with Bari's labor union organizing activities last winter among loggers and environmentalists, a new direction for Earth First! (see *In These Times*, Oct. 25, 1989). Bari established the first Earth First! branch of the International Workers of the World last spring. (Earth First! has long employed many tactics first popularized by the Wobblies 80 years ago, such as tree-spiking and sit-ins.)

According to co-founder Roselle, there has been a mutual distrust between Earth First! and law-enforcement officials since the organization was founded. But, say environmentalists, any groups that try to obstruct outdated U.S. traditions of turf-management techniques such as Indian genocide or corporate resource raiding may find themselves unprotected—if not outright targeted—by the government for eradication. —J.G.

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By Salim Muwakkil

**W**Henever the chorus of regulars at the Golden Skillet restaurant, on Chicago's South Side, would begin its ritual denunciation of the "white conspiracy to destroy black leadership," Reggie Smith could be counted on to deliver an articulate dissent. Smith, a high school history teacher, would argue passionately that the problem was shoddy black leadership, not white conspirators. But now he's joined the chorus.

"When I found out that the government spent nearly \$50 million over a number of years to catch [Washington, D.C., Mayor] Marion Barry on a misdemeanor, I was sha-

## POLITICS

ken," Smith explained. "And then I heard Jesse [Jackson] run down a list of other officials who've been investigated, and I began reconsidering my former position."

The last straw, Smith said, was the recent federal indictment of Rep. Floyd Flake (D-NY), a prominent black minister, on charges of diverting church funds for his own use. On Aug. 2, a 17-count federal indictment was unsealed, charging Flake and his wife with engaging in a conspiracy to obtain thousands of dollars illegally from the Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church, one of New York City's largest and oldest black churches. "I've been an admirer of Congressman Flake for many years, and I've marveled at the positive things he's managed to accomplish using his church as an economic base," said Smith.

Smith's conversion illustrates a growing sense among African-Americans that the federal government is becoming more overtly antagonistic to their growing influence. In barbershops and laundromats, in supermarkets, taverns and wherever black people gather, the conversation increasingly turns to discussions of "the conspiracy." And the discussion is not limited to community enclaves. Benjamin Hooks, head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, sparked headlines and a spate of stinging editorials when he told delegates at the group's annual convention last July that the harassment of black officials has reached a level comparable to that during the post-Civil War Reconstruction era.

**Psychic reparations:** The well-publicized case of Mayor Barry is in part fueling much of this renewed concern. Barry's videotaped crack-smoking bust was extraordinarily embarrassing to many African-Americans who, because of this country's history of racist exclusion, tend to regard black elected officials as important symbols of racial affirmation rather than mere politicians. The history of affirmative black men in the U.S. has too often been one of lynching or lesser forms of debasement.

Barry cynically exploited this heightened cultural status to deflect attention from his notorious indiscretions and from the charges of corruption that have plagued him for much of his tenure. That so many are willing to rush to his defense despite the trial's dismal revelations demonstrates how potent a symbol he has become.

In many ways, those rallying around Barry are moved by the same impulse that motivated defenders of Tawana Brawley, the black teenager who claimed she was gang-raped by several white men; they seek psychic reparations for historic racism. Although exhaustive investigations have revealed Brawley's story as a likely fraud, many



## Federal racism rides on backs of black officials

prefer to believe her. To them she represents a cultural archetype more than an individual. For centuries, black men watched helplessly as their white masters sexually exploited black women. The varied hues of African-Americans are a concrete testament to the routine of forced miscegenation that characterized early America. And yet, according to Amnesty International, no white man has ever been executed for raping a black woman.

But the concern over selective prosecutions of black officials is more than just symbolic. "There is an ugly national pattern of FBI and IRS harassment of black officials," said Jesse Jackson in a recent television interview. "For example, David Dinkins becomes mayor, and the next day they move on him with a charge that he did a bad radio deal and stock exchange.... There was no indictment, no conviction, and he's had to pay out over \$200,000 defending himself against an investigation." Another example, adds Jackson, is that of Rep. William Gray (D-PA), who, of the eve of his selection as House majority whip, was visited by FBI officials investigating ghost-employee charges. The ghost was never found, says Jackson, "and when they lost that, they doubled back and launched an IRS check eight years deep."

Jackson also cites the case of Rep. Harold Ford (D-TN), who in 1987 was indicted and subsequently cleared on 19 counts of mail

and bank fraud. "The cost to Congressman Ford was \$2.5 million," says Jackson. "So there may not be a plan but there certainly is an ugly pattern. It's also fresh in our minds that Dr. [Martin Luther] King, the moral authority that he was, was victimized by wire taps and by trials and by leaks and even by hiring somebody on our staff to leak information to the FBI to discredit him."

**Selective prosecution:** Faye Williams, staff counsel to Rep. Mervyn Dymally (D-CA)

**There is a growing sense among African-Americans that the federal government is becoming more overtly antagonistic to their growing influence.**

and a former congressional candidate from Louisiana, is convinced that the harassment of black officials is more a plan than just a pattern. "In 1987, Rep. Dymally commissioned a study to consider the question of harassment of black public officials," Williams explained. "That study was itself an

update of one done in 1977 that had concluded that there was indeed a pattern of harassment of black public officials. The updated study," adds Williams, "which was titled *Harassment of Black Elected Officials, Ten Years Later*, was even more chilling in its disclosures of incidents of harassment."

Williams is in the process of compiling information for yet another update and says that so far she has found that the harassment has expanded to include many other segments of the African-American community. "It's touching appointed as well as elected officials, business leaders, civil-rights leaders and community leaders," she says. "I'd have to say it's reaching epidemic proportions, and it's clearly about taking away the black community's power—what little we've gained."

According to Williams, although the situation has reached a near-crisis, many prominent blacks are turning their backs on the problem. "Instead of being more courageous, many of our most influential African-Americans are backing away to join the enemy," she says. "Many of them are aping the classic white liberal line that corruption is bad in officials of any race. But that's not the point. Guilt or innocence is irrelevant to the point that there is overwhelming evidence of selective prosecution of black officials."

**No kinder, no gentler:** Dymally is presently conducting public hearings around the country to provide more comprehensive data on the extent of governmental harassment of black officials, adds Williams. The 1987 report concluded that the social climate of the country provides the context for harassment and that the public mood is shaped by the federal government's position on civil-rights enforcement. While an overtly hostile Ronald Reagan was in the White House that year, Williams says the "kinder, gentler" Bush administration has done little to alter the Reaganite social presumptions. And as time passes, it is becoming clearer that the racist attitudes unleashed by the Reagan decade have fueled the growth of the neo-Nazi movement, a development thoroughly catalogued by Elinor Langer in the July 16 edition of *The Nation*.

Williams herself is particularly sensitive to the issue of harassment, as she was victimized by one of the most bizarre incidents recorded in the 1987 study. Her 1986 primary victory over four white opponents was virtually ignored by both the local and national media. But on the eve of the general election, her campaign helicopter was forced to land at an Air Force base where those aboard were greeted by armed officers. The following day, the local media headlined the story, alleging abusive language and misconduct by the candidate and her staff. No information was ever presented explaining the incident, and Williams lost the election by less than 1 percent of the vote. "Until this day, I've received no explanation for the forced landing," she notes. "And the Air Force has conveniently lost all information regarding the radio messages ordering them to force us down."

Williams says the most effective way to counter the attack on black officials is, first, to make sure African-Americans are fully aware of the problem and the myriad forms it can take, and then to take unified action to fight it. "As long as we have influential African-Americans denying that this kind of harassment exists, the government will be able to get away with it," she adds. If it's up to the regulars at the Golden Skillet, that won't happen. □



By Denis MacShane

SOFIA, BULGARIA

IN THE SHABBY CONSULAR SECTION OF THE British Embassy in Sofia, two portraits confront each other uneasily. One is a magnificently English '50s Gloriana of the Queen, splendidly young in white gown and decorations. The other is a communist terrorist—at least that is how the Germans described its subject, Maj. Frank Thompson, before executing him.

## BULGARIA

The photo of Thompson is also magnificently English—handsome and strong-faced in desert uniform with a pipe jutting out of his mouth. But Thompson never became the hero in post-war Britain to which his bravery entitled him. He had been sent on a secret mission to link up Bulgarian partisans, to support communists. He was of the left himself. His brother, E.P. Thompson, in the immediate post-war years was a prominent communist intellectual.

Thus, Thompson became an un-person in Britain but a hero in Bulgaria. One of Sofia's biggest streets is named after him. There is

**"They would go crazy if Maggie came," says one British observer living in Bulgaria.**

a bas-relief on a wall in the city center. And, most appropriately for a man who gave his life so young, there is even a Maj. Thompson kindergarten.

Bulgaria's British connection goes back further. There are Gladstone squares in fond memory of the great campaign by the 19th-century British premiere William Ewart Gladstone to drive the Turks "bag and baggage" out of Bulgaria and a Buxton Street, named after the Buxton brothers, who, at

# Balkan Thatcherism: Bulgaria's confused beast

the beginning of the century, ran a notable campaign on behalf of Bulgarian independence.

According to Mike Power, a London leftist and the only resident Western correspondent in Bulgaria, another British figure would receive an ecstatic reception were she to visit. "They would go crazy if Maggie came," he said.

Leaflets supplied by young English Conservatives adorn the walls of the office block occupied by the Union of Democratic Forces, the umbrella group for such organizations as the revived Social Democratic Party, the green Ecoglasnost movement, the new independent trade union Podkrepa and the newspaper *Democracy*. They show a picture of an empty food shop in Eastern Europe and a bustling street market. "Under Socialism, nothing to sell. Under Capitalism, plenty to buy," read the captions under the respective pictures. As elsewhere in the former Soviet imperium, the hunger for Western consumption patterns is overwhelming in Bulgaria.

Yet Balkan Thatcherism is a confused beast. Representatives of Podkrepa speak of two main demands. First, how to privatize the economy—creating a free market and introducing tough management. Second, how to prevent unemployment. The two goals are not necessarily incompatible, as the Swedes, Swiss, Austrians or Japanese can demonstrate. But the trick of maintaining a market economy plus full employment—and decent social provisions for all citizens—has certainly escaped Britain and the U.S., the two countries whose ideologues and economists are loudest and most locally present in advising Bulgaria and other ex-Soviet satellites on what to do.

In Bulgaria, the present pattern of employment is certainly unsustainable. A trip around

the showplace steel plant at Radomir, about 25 miles from Sofia, shows why. The plant is a perfect monument to the bankers and governments who in the '70s recycled petrodollars in the form of easy-to-get loans to

**The problem for any Bulgarian reformer, whether in government or in opposition, is to dispose of the formidable number of people who have a salary and a social position by dint of being supporters of the system and little else.**

East European authorities. Each giant shed, the size of an aircraft hangar, contains a German, a Japanese or a Swedish, electric arc furnace or forging or milling machine.

Most are silent, however, unworkable for lack of spare parts or qualified technicians. And even by the dirty norms of a steel plant, this place—the most modern in Bulgaria—is filthy and full of safety hazards not permitted under even the most recalcitrant regime in the West.

**Striking for safety:** Safety and the workplace environment were at the center of a big strike at Radomir earlier this year. The strikers, led by women who drive the cranes that transport molten steel ladles the length of the plant, demanded a host of improvements in their working condition. They included proper ventilation against poisonous fumes, identification of the ferrous alloys they worked with, regular machinery maintenance, heat in the winter when temperatures can fall to minus 20 degrees Fahrenheit and, logically enough, the dismissal of the director who had allowed such conditions.

As with so many of the other East European strikes that utterly eroded the claim of ruling Communist parties to exercise power in the name of the workers—beginning in Gdansk in 1980—the Radomir strikers did not ask for more pay. Instead they put forward 21 demands they believed would improve their lot and the running of the plant.

The 21 demands recall the 21 conditions laid down by Lenin in 1920 for adherence to the Communist International. Two of those conditions demanded the splitting of socialist unions and the creation of unions loyal to Moscow—a rupture in the organized working class that has ever since left it less than the whole of the sum of its parts.

The Bulgarian workers on strike at the Radomir steel plant knew little of such history. None had been to downtown Sofia, where the mausoleum of the last secretary of the Communist International, Georgi Di-

mitrov, stands. Dimitrov's body lies in a clammy underground room stinking of something—presumably embalming fluid—in a glass case, a waxy, white face in a black suit looking much as he must have when taking orders from Stalin in the '30s and '40s.

Historian Franz Borkenau, of the Communist International, judged Dimitrov to be the least intelligent of the major pre-war European Communist leaders. In Bulgaria, his great moment came in 1925 when he tried to assassinate the king and overthrow the government by blowing up Sofia cathedral as numerous government officials attended mass. One hundred twenty-three people were killed—but not those targeted. Dimitrov redeemed himself in 1933 by his vigorous defense in a Berlin trial when the Nazis accused him of setting fire to the Reichstag. But such history is known by heart only to Communists of a certain generation or by students of international communism, which now seems ancient, antiquarian and no longer a guide to contemporary politics.

There is a recovery of history in Bulgaria, but it is focused on what happened between 1944, when the Soviet army and the Bulgarian partisans chased out the Germans, and 1947, when the Iron Curtain fell definitively. The E.P. Thompsons of Bulgaria want to recover their hidden history. The rule of incompetent monarchs and a feudal pro-Nazi oligarchy has been covered in post-war communist historiography. What has been hidden are the precise mechanisms of the Communist takeover and the destruction of the great hopes in 1944 for a democratic revolution—crushed by show trials, judicial murders and the rest, which Dimitrov, sent back from Moscow in 1945, imposed on Bulgaria.

The answer, it seems—and it is relevant for today's question of the free market and full employment—lay in the role of the Communist Party as the only avenue for advancement in post-war Bulgaria. In 1944, there were no more than 40,000 industrial workers. By the end of that year, however, the Bulgarian Communist Party numbered 254,000. By 1948, the party had 495,000 members. A Balkan nose for where power lay, rather than a knowledge of ideology or the party line, predominated. Their chiefs became known as the "briefcase boys" and looked after family, friends or peasants from the same village to create a network of obligations and loyalties. The title *nomenklatura* is rather too noble a term for what was a clan system secured by obedience to the ruling power.

The problem for any Bulgarian reformer, whether in government or in opposition, is disposing of this formidable number of people who have a salary and a social position by dint of being supporters of the system and little else. At the Radomir steel plant, for example, one of the strikers' chief demands was to eliminate administration staff who, in their view, were complete parasites. Officials of the Communist union or party were on the payroll as workers, drawing wages, overtime and other benefits. Each, of course, had a secretary, also listed as a worker and entitled to proletarian privileges. This is not a blue-collar moan about the office staff. A West German steel company was asked to draw up a report on the efficient management of the Radomir plant and decided that the total number of managers, administrators and other office staff should amount to 136. At present 1,100 are employed in those functions. So the great em-

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ployment shakeout in Bulgaria, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, does not necessarily entail a final farewell to the industrial proletariat, whose skills properly harnessed should be needed more than ever. Rather, the scores of thousands of seat-polishing jobs that provided the payroll support for the Communist Party are now under threat.

**Dead weight:** Some of the jobs are ludicrous. Every Bulgarian academic department employs highly paid censors to ensure that no state secrets are revealed when Bulgarian scientists send papers for conference publication overseas. Given that it is a crime to publish two map coordinates that indicate a location anywhere in Bulgaria, the scope for such absurd "work" is limitless.

It is easy to make fun of these people and wish them into the dustbin of unemployment or into such menial but useful jobs as road-sweeping, which they inflicted upon their opponents in the '70s and '80s.

Revenge on these power-abusers, placemen and exploiters is naturally sweet, but that may be to substitute in 1990 the same kind of upheaval based on rancor and arbitrary political classification as, in of course a more murderous way, took place between 1944 and 1947. The replacement of Communist totalitarianism by totalitarian aspects of capitalism would indeed be a negation of the great hopes placed in this new springtime of democracy in Europe's other half.

One reason perhaps that the imposition of Stalinism on Eastern Europe and the Balkans was so easily achieved was the silence of many left-wing writers and intellectuals in Western Europe. In September 1947, the Bulgarian government executed Nikola Petkov, leader of the left-wing Agrarian Party, who refused to buckle under to Communist rule. Kingsly Martin, editor of the London leftist weekly the *New Statesman*, wrote a *mea culpa* denouncing Petkov's execution

as "an evil and dishonest affair," but adding, "I have been slow to join in protests about political trials in Eastern Europe because these protests are too often inspired by ignorance and prejudice." If Martin admitted that much, many opinion-formers on the U.S. and British left—later famous for their denunciations of Stalinism once Khrushchev had paved the way in 1956—were silent in that key moment of change between the liberation of most European countries by the end of 1944 and the definitive launch of the Cold War with the Marshall Plan and the creation of Cominform in 1947.

The accusation *trahison des clercs* is wheeled out all too easily, but it does seem a fair description of the position of many of the best brains and writers of the left after 1945. That's history. Now it is current affairs. Will today's commentators, who so eloquently told us about the failings of communism in the '80s, find space to warn their friends

about some of the dangers of unfettered capitalism?

Each generation of intellectuals finds it hard to tell the whole truth if it means confronting a particular ideological vision that inspires and reassures. Thus the Thompsons of the '40s failed to face up publicly to the contradictions and potential cruelties of the communism triumphant in East Europe. Will their successors, so busy with articles and books, continue only to celebrate, or are they prepared also to warn? ☐

**Denis MacShane** is a freelance writer based in Geneva, Switzerland. He specializes on international labor issues.

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## By Maggie Garb

The tradition, called "going to the grannies," refers to the ancient ritual of removing the clitoris and often other genital parts of young girls.

Generally performed without anesthesia by an elderly woman with little medical training, female circumcision, according to estimates from the World Health Organization (WHO) has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of girls and in severe medical problems for thousands of others during this century.

Over the past decade this several-thousand-year-old custom has attracted attention from health-care workers and officials throughout the world. But while the United Nations and WHO, along with the leaders of several African nations, have spoken out against the operation, the tradition continues in more than a dozen African countries. And American researchers are now expressing concern that female circumcision is being performed in immigrant communities in the U.S.

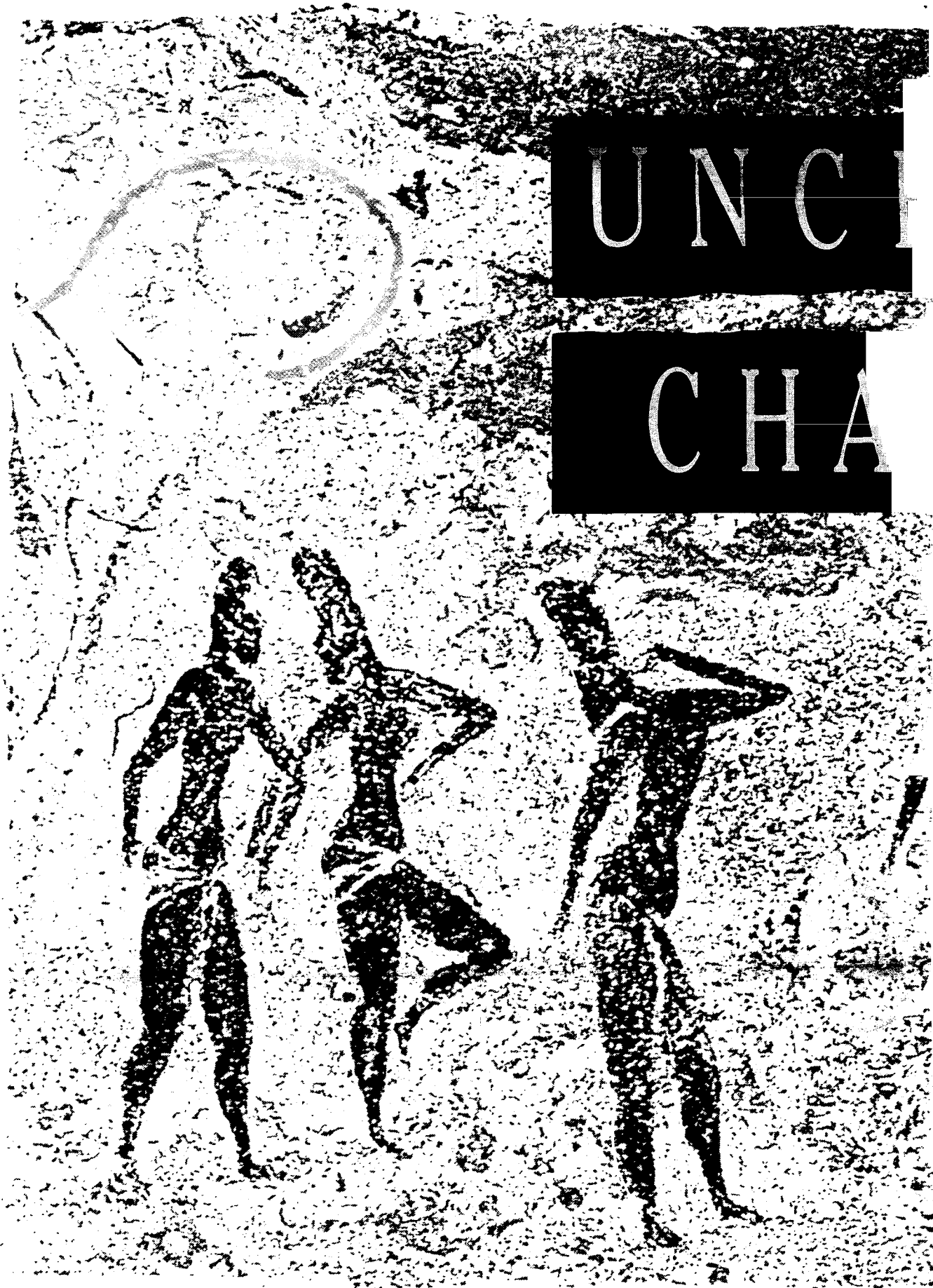
For U.S. physicians and health-care workers, the practice pits Western medicine against African tradition. While physicians generally agree that the practice is dangerous and can cause severe long-term health problems, it is considered a prerequisite for marriage in African cultures and many African women refuse to give up the operation. Some Africans view the custom as a means of asserting a cultural identity. In the 1930s, Jomo Kenyatta, as he led the fight for independence of the British East African territory that is now Kenya, called female circumcision a symbol of African culture and urged his followers to have their daughters circumcised. In recent years, this attitude has diminished as the presidents of Sudan and Kenya have outlawed the procedure and, along with other political leaders, urged Africans to halt the practice. Yet change is slow. Evidence from Sudan and Somalia, countries where the most extreme form of circumcision is practiced, shows that nine of 10 girls still undergo the operation.

In addition, the culture clash has forced some Westerners to lower their voices in the fight to eradicate the practice. Said one American researcher who requested anonymity, "This was a very controversial issue several years ago. If we really want to eliminate it, we have to let African women lead the fight."

**Diary of a custom:** But as African women who have immigrated to the U.S. approach American doctors for health care, an increasing number of U.S. physicians are being pulled into the debate. There have been no studies of the incidence of female circumcision in the U.S. because the practice is highly secretive and physicians and social workers often fear discussing it publicly. Many fear retribution from the African communities they work in, believing their lives and the lives of African women who have complained to them would be endangered. In *These Times* interviews with more than a dozen researchers and physicians in the U.S. uncovered anecdotal evidence that the operation, although not widely practiced, is occurring in such cities as Detroit, Atlanta, Washington, D.C., and New York City.

One physician, who requested anonymity, says that an African woman had approached her, upset because her husband wanted her daughter circumcised. The physician believes the child was eventually circumcised. Other researchers offered evidence that the practice occurs in some U.S. cities that have large African populations. Physicians at large hospitals in Detroit, Atlanta, Washington and New York all say they have seen women patients who have been circumcised, though none had clear evidence that the women had been circumcised in the U.S. One physician knew of an affluent African family that brought a midwife from Africa to circumcise several daughters. Others had heard of parents who sent their daughters to their country of origin to undergo the ritual.

Fran Hoskin, editor of the Lexington, Mass.-based *Women's International Network News*, has done extensive research on the practice in Africa. "People take their customs with them wherever they go," she says. "If you look at the number of Africans living in the U.S. and Europe, then you know that it is occurring in those places."



Indeed, until recently the ritual was practiced fairly openly in Europe. Following reports that London doctors were circumcising daughters of wealthy African immigrants, Great Britain banned the operation in the late '70s. France also outlawed it in 1978 after a Malian girl died, apparently as a result of circumcision. Sweden also recently prohibited the practice. But in the U.S., where estimates put the number of African immigrants at more than 200,000 over the past 10 years, no state or federal law specifically covers the procedure.

Judianne Densen-Gerber, a lawyer and psychiatrist based in New York, believes that female circumcision would be illegal under existing child-abuse laws, but the practice has never been tested in the U.S. courts. Arguing that the number of circumcisions among African girls in the U.S. is growing, she is pushing for legislation that would specifically ban the practice. She says immigrants, fearing that their children are becoming "too Westernized," are reviving the custom in clandestine U.S. clinics.

"I have found that it is basically done to control the child's sexuality. I see it as a response to the freedom that female children find in this country," she says, adding that it is "misogyny, anti-woman."

Efforts to study the practice in the U.S. are thwarted by the limited contact many African women have with the U.S. health-care system. A 1985 study by Evelyn Shaw, a retired lecturer in community health nursing at the Univer-

sity of Arizona, found that circumcised African immigrants feared visits to U.S. physicians, believing they were unaware of the practice.

"These women are concerned that physicians, when they went to examine them, would be appalled," she says. "These were upper-class, educated women, but this is something that most women just don't discuss."

Shaw interviewed 12 women who had been circumcised as young girls in Sudan, Egypt and Somalia and were living in Tucson while their husbands attended graduate school. These women had received extremely poor care during childbirth in the U.S., resulting in postpartum infections, tearing and improper suturing during delivery.

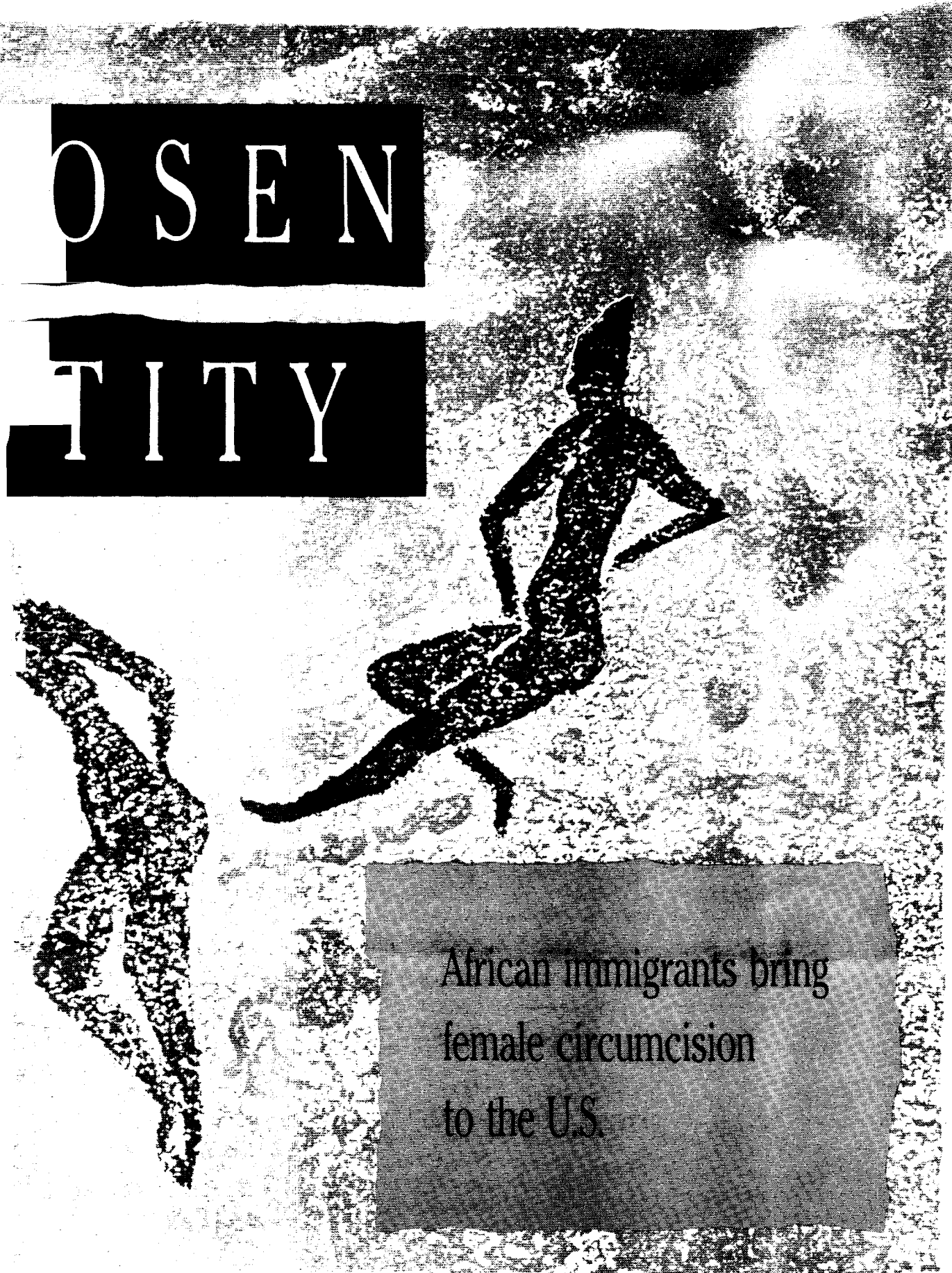
In an informal survey of U.S. student health services that had contacts with circumcised women, Shaw found that more than 40 circumcised female patients had been seen by 12 of 48 health centers responding to the survey. Of the respondents, 25 said they had seen at least one circumcised woman in the preceding year, with some having seen up to 10. In most cases, the women approached the doctors only during pregnancy or when they had complications due to the circumcision.

**Prisoners of ritual:** Generally a means of guarding virginity and deterring sexual intercourse outside of marriage, female circumcision has been practiced on an estimated 84 million women and girls living in Africa today. It remains a custom in a swath of 20 African countries,



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African immigrants bring  
female circumcision  
to the U.S.

running from Mauritania on the Atlantic Ocean to Somalia on the Indian Ocean and, to a lesser extent, on the southern coastal region of the Arabian Peninsula, in Malaysia and in Indonesia.

Called "female circumcision" or, among its opponents, "female sexual mutilation," the practice takes a variety of forms, depending on local custom. In its simplest and most rare form, the custom requires the slitting of the hood of the clitoris. In another, more common practice, the clitoris is excised and the labia minora removed. In its most extreme form, the practice is called "infibulation" or "pharaonic circumcision" and involves the excision of the entire vulva, including the clitoris, labia minora and labia majora. The sides of the vulva are then stitched together with thread or thorns, leaving only a matchstick-size opening for urine and menstrual flow.

For many communities, female circumcision is part of a ritual marking the onset of womanhood. Although in parts of Ethiopia and Nigeria the operation is performed on infant girls, in other countries girls are circumcised between the ages of eight and 13.

According to a recent book by Hanny Lightfoot-Klein, a social psychologist who spent six years studying the practice in Sudan, Kenya and Egypt, several girls often undergo the procedure at the same time. The girls are taken to a hut or gathering place outside a village.

There, often in a festive atmosphere, an elderly woman uses pieces of glass or a knife to remove the girls' sexual organs. The girls sometimes are bathed in a river, if there is one nearby. But generally the operation is performed without hygienic tools.

In her book *Prisoners of Ritual*, Lightfoot-Klein describes the atmosphere surrounding the circumcision. "The rites themselves are couched in mystery, and although the girl generally realizes something fearsome will happen to her ... she is helped not to focus on this aspect of the event.... At the circumcision itself (I am told) she is surrounded by loved and loving faces that weep for her pain and offer sympathy and encouragement ... but I have been in anterooms while circumcisions were taking place and have seen the personal torment women were undergoing, the frantic weeping and wailing that took place as shrieks of terror and pain issue from the other room."

Although many Africans told Lightfoot-Klein that the operation is a necessary and often joyous part of a ceremonial step to womanhood, female circumcision often has serious consequences. There are many reports of young girls who have bled to death following the procedure, others of girls going into surgical shock, contracting tetanus and other infections. According to a 1985 report by the faculty of medicine at the University of Khartoum, the operation carries a high risk of a tear

in the vaginal wall and sometimes incontinence, as well as risk of damage to the rectum, bladder and urethra. The long-term health consequences include a variety of gynecological and obstetrical problems, including chronic pelvic infection and infertility.

For many women who have been infibulated, the scar must be partially opened, usually with a knife, to allow sexual penetration on the marriage night, and circumcised women require an anterior episiotomy during childbirth to prevent spontaneous tearing and impeded labor. Many are reinfibulated following childbirth. In some women, the scar tissue becomes so dense that it loses elasticity and will not stretch far enough to allow birth. The result, sometimes, is the death of the woman or the child.

**History of the practice:** The history of female circumcision is murky. The practice, according to researchers, predates Islam in Egypt, Arabia and along the Red Sea coasts. Some anthropologists believe that female circumcision can be traced to an ancient African puberty rite. Today, some Islamic women believe the operation is mandated by the teachings of Islam, but there is no doctrinal basis for that belief. The custom, which, interestingly, is not observed in the Moslem stronghold of Saudi Arabia, is practiced by Moslems, Catholics, Protestants, animists and atheists.

Although female circumcision was once more widespread than it is today, it was not discussed publicly until 1979, when a WHO seminar in Khartoum featured the first open debates about the practice. There, African women spoke out against it and formed several organizations designed to eliminate the custom. U.S. researchers, working with such organizations as the Washington-based Population Crisis Committee, have launched efforts aimed at supporting the movement against female circumcision in Africa.

Researchers and health-care workers attempting to halt the practice admit that this custom is so deeply embedded in African tradition that even in their best-case scenario it will not likely be abandoned for at least several generations. In her book on female circumcision, *Sisters in Affliction*, Raqiya Haji Dualeh, a vice minister in the Somali Ministry of Health, argues that the practice is now more a symbol of male dominance in many African nations than a female initiatory rite. In a patrilineal society, circumcision, especially the most extreme forms, insures virginity at the time of marriage. For many the operation signifies purity and cleanliness. By curbing female sexuality, it guarantees the husband's control over the wife's body.

Quoted in a 1985 *Washington Post* article, Dualeh said, "The belief is so deep that even mothers who can see the damage the practice causes them are hesitant not to circumcise their daughters. The prestige of the family, the future of their daughter in the one most important duty in her life, marriage, depends on the tradition."

Trissa Baden, an obstetrician-gynecologist at St. Paul Ramsey Medical Center in St. Paul, Minn., says that things will change only when female circumcision is no longer a prerequisite to marriage and social position in African culture.

Baden, who studied female circumcision in Sierra Leone and has seen several circumcised women in U.S. hospitals, says that the ritual will likely prove intractable among African immigrants in the U.S. She notes that immigrants sometimes hold onto their home country's customs even after the customs have changed or been abandoned there.

For Africans, as for other immigrant groups, tradition contributes to the stability of a family or a community in a new and alien culture. "The culture and the rituals that go along with circumcision are not necessarily bad. In fact, they are very important and can be empowering for young girls. But the disfiguring part of the ritual is not OK," Baden says.

As Africans have long battled Western pressure to conform to European cultural ideals, many Africans are loath to relinquish one of the strongest and most persistent symbols of their cultural identity. For many Africans living in the U.S., female circumcision represents a bond to their homeland. The question facing both the immigrants and those remaining in Africa is whether they can retain the culture cohesion that ritualized circumcision symbolizes while eliminating the mutilating operation. □

**Maggie Garb**, former *In These Times* promotions director, is a Chicago-based journalist.



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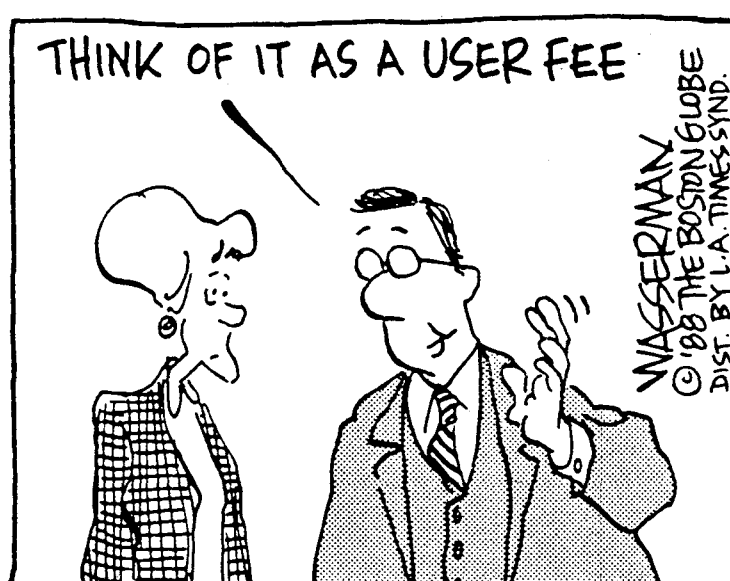
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## Nibbling the edges of electoral reform

In the first week of August the Senate and the House each passed campaign-reform bills designed to reduce spending on congressional elections and partially subsidize these campaigns with public money. The bills are a response to popular outrage over a series of financial scandals in which members of Congress received large campaign contributions from savings and loan institutions and other corporate interests in return for special favors. As the public has come to understand ever more clearly that the people they elect to Congress are not representing their interests, fewer and fewer people have bothered to vote. And as fewer people voted, seats in Congress have become lifetime sinecures.

For a decade or more, the public has turned its back on politics while our "public servants" have sold themselves to oil companies, S&Ls, arms manufacturers, corporate polluters and other corporate special interests. But the growing disparity between rich and poor and the magnitude of the S&L scandal have created an ugly mood back in the local constituencies. There is a widespread feeling that the corruption has become too costly and the corrupt too complacent—and that something must change.

That is the popular impetus for electoral reform. And one expression of it is a campaign by Common Cause, Public Citizen and 55 other organizations for a bill that would limit the amount of political action committee (PAC) money that a candidate for Congress can receive. The legislation would also set overall spending limits for congressional races, provide public campaign funds in the form of reduced postal and television rates and ban soft money contributions to candidates for federal office. The Senate and House bills both address these issues, though somewhat differently.

The Senate bill would eliminate PACs altogether, establish voluntary state-by-state spending limits for campaigns (the Supreme Court has ruled mandatory limits unconstitutional), and offer compliant candidates free TV time, low-cost mail and extra money if their opponents don't abide by the set limits. Spending limits for Senate

seats would vary according to each state's population and would range from \$950,000 to \$5.5 million.

The House bill would limit spending to \$550,000 per candidate in congressional districts—more if a House candidate has a close primary fight—and would keep PACs, but it would limit their contributions to 50 percent of the spending limit (such a limit in 1988 would not have affected 75 percent of House candidates). The House would give candidates three free TV ads for each two they bought and would reduce postal rates for candidates by 50 percent.

Not surprisingly, these reforms merely tinker with the edges of the problem, which is less that of incumbency than the almost total reliance of candidates on television advertising. Reliance on television means big bucks. Incumbency helps raise the money because PACs want legislative favors and these favors can be turned into money by those in office throughout their terms. This system bypasses local political organizations and relegates political activity in legislative districts to a minor role. In short, it has tended to create 435 individual political parties in the House and 100 in the Senate.

And given the effectiveness of negative TV spots—and the desire of most congressional candidates to avoid serious discussion of the social issues they spend their time in Congress avoiding—members of Congress have little incentive to make more than cosmetic changes in the way elections are run. If they can appear to be reducing the influence of big money without undermining their sinecures they will be happy as clams.

In our view, this will be the outcome until television access is removed from the electoral equation. Two reforms are needed. First, free TV and radio ads for federal candidates should be made a requirement of all television and radio station licenses. Second, free ads should be for a minimum of 5 minutes each and in a reasonable time slot (candidates who want to spend their own money would still have a constitutional right to buy spot ads).

Doing this would go about as far as possible in eliminating the advantages of big money and incumbency. It would make it possible for candidates who have local organizations or followings to participate on an almost equal basis. And it would give working people some hope that participation in politics might be more than a token gesture to formal democracy.



# LETTERS

## One, two, three What were we fighting for?

**I**N A RECENT "VIEWPOINT," JAMES B. GILBERT SUGGESTED that the debate over the Cold War be reopened and refocused on ways in which it influenced domestic politics (*JTT*, July 18). While such a reopened discussion is essential, Gilbert is far too willing to concede defeat of the left in the original debate. To be effective, any reopened debate needs to be much broader than that suggested in the article. It is equally important that we reopen discussion of what are referred to as the "old positions," most of which focus on the Cold War's origins.

The end of the Cold War has brought with it ridiculous and self-congratulatory claims from Reaganites of both parties that they "were right all along." Gilbert contributes to this claim when he suggests that a U.S. "victory" has brought with it "an unraveling of long-held assumptions." Neither position is warranted. On the contrary, the American claim of victory does not imply that the militarists were ever right, nor does it suggest an unraveling of the left's basic assumptions. After all, the Cold War debate was never primarily about who would win as much as why we were fighting. The left's assumptions about the Cold War include the following elements: that the U.S. is an imperial power, that American commitment to capitalism leads to a continual search for worldwide markets, and that such a commitment to ideological capitalism is often at the root of major international conflicts. Have these positions been rendered invalid?

Certainly, victory does not imply virtue. The most important of the left's assumptions about the Cold War are not unraveled by recent events. Gilbert's call for a reopened debate should include a question about the degree to which American policy was responsible for initiating the conflict.

James Mamer  
Irvine, Calif.

## Privatizing struggle?

**Y**OUR ARTICLES AND EDITORIALS ARE A SOURCE OF highly valuable information and of thoughtful and challenging points of view for me. I am grateful to you for what you represent. But your editorial, "If Moscow can do it, why can't we?" (*JTT*, July 18), about the privatization of public housing, seems off base. A better question is, "Moscow did it, but why should we?"

Public-housing units are occupied by tenants who have a subsidized rent that does not reflect the true costs, especially maintenance, of that unit. These tenants are part of the millions of households who are "housing poor," unable to meet basic needs after they have paid for market-rate housing. Public-housing authorities are still one of the most cost-efficient ways to provide affordable housing. Other mechanisms—limited-equity cooperatives, land trusts and mutual housing—are being developed and should be encouraged.

But a policy of privatization of units would produce defaults, foreclosures and the eventual transfer of formerly public and affordable units to the hands of entrepreneurs such as the numerous landlords across the country wishing to pre-pay the mortgages on their federally financed Sec-

tion 8 developments and take that publicly generated housing out of use for low-income people. Privatization will further impoverish those most in need of affordable housing, cause deterioration and loss of housing stock and enrich the few.

As for public-housing blight, how would turning over blighted complexes be practical or fair to the poor? And why should the many well-run projects be privatized?

Please rethink your rather loosely argued and reckless endorsement of privatization. In this time of breathtaking change and much-needed self-criticism on the left, we can become so open-minded as to risk being empty-headed. Homeless advocates, housing activists and socialists are engaged in attempting to force this country to honor its commitment to an estimated 8 million poorly housed, underhoused and homeless households.

Privatization will not result in greater control, greater independence or greater motivation on the part of public-housing tenants. It will only "privatize" even further their individual struggles to survive—hardly a desirable socialist result. I agree with you that economic equality means a democratization of the means by which property is disposed. But it also means, at least, social forms of property where the private forms have failed so universally, as they have in housing.

Ken Smith-Shuman  
Delaware Coalition for the Homeless  
Wilmington, Del.

## ...or barbarism?

**W**ILLIAM GIBSON PRACTICALLY PORTRAYS THE National Rifle Association (NRA) as a progressive organization in his review of their recent convention (*JTT*, July 18). I don't know if this is because of Rep. Mike Espy's speech to the convention or that a lot of the members are working class and reflect many of the understandable fears and frustrations of working-class people. The same could be said of the Ku Klux Klan.

The most glaring hole in Gibson's article is that he does not locate the NRA within the context of our violent culture and society. American society entertains itself with violence while censoring sex. Our culture believes that violence is OK and that violence solves problems both domestic and foreign. Violence is used with little hesitation to enforce an order of men over women, adults over children, whites over minorities, straights over gays and the U.S. over uppity Third World countries.

The NRA is the trade association of our unique form of participatory violence. Within our domestic wars, the NRA plays the same role the defense contractor and arms

merchant play internationally. In a less-violent society, the NRA would be out of business.

We don't need gun control as traditionally thought of. We need a domestic peace movement that will ratchet down the domestic arms race both in the general populace and in the government's ability to use force. We need a peace movement that will speak to the justified insecurities of communities who look to guns for individual and group protection. We need to uproot the culture of violence—root and branch. We need a society where the NRA is a quaint memory of a barbaric past.

Randy J. Cunningham  
Cleveland, Ohio

## Labor less, live more

**T**HE RECENT CONFERENCE HELD TO DISCUSS THE situation faced by organized labor to the winding down of the Cold War raised all the expected issues. Jack Clark's upbeat report (*JTT*, Aug. 1) provides one with a summary of organized labor's response. It is obvious that unemployment in this sector will increase. What is not obvious is the solution that was suggested by the conference of creating new needs to keep people employed. Certainly there are needs that have gone unmet because of the spending priorities set by the Reagan and Bush regimes, and these should be addressed. But must we continue to rely on an economic model of full employment? Has the labor movement lost sight of its old demand for a 35-hour work week?

In a recent issue of the *Boston Globe Magazine* there was an article about how full-time work was coming to consume more and more of our lives in the U.S. One example given was that of a union organizer who spent so much time on the job that he hardly ever saw his children. The irony was that he was an organizer for day-care workers. It doesn't take much reflection to see the meaning this state of affairs has for this individual's life, which could be a parable for all of us within late capitalism. We have all come to rely to an increasing extent on the marketplace for the satisfaction of our needs. Both family and community have been sacrificed because there is no money to be made.

To be sure, more often than not there is no choice. And times are even harder than they once were, requiring two incomes to maintain a modest living. But the overwhelming support for the bill Bush vetoed that mandated unpaid leave for workers to take care of children and sick relatives indicates that there exists a constituency for a reduction in the 40-hour work week. The

winding down of the Cold War offers the labor movement an opportunity, an opening as it were, to provide a different solution to the chronic problem of unemployment. Why not work less so that we all can work and live more?

Patrick Patterson  
Ipswich, Mass.

## A lose-lose situation

**D**AVID MOBERG DID AN EXCELLENT CRITIQUE OF the Greyhound crisis (*JTT*, June 20). Greyhound is in dire straits; many of the union strikers have other work to keep them going. The union doesn't have the money to buy out the company. We're not talking about airline pilots here.

Fred Curey has valiantly tried to keep the company afloat, but there is absolutely no entrepreneur in this country who wants to buy America's only national bus carrier. If the government decided that Curey has to pay back some \$70 million in back pay, the country will not have an inter-city bus carrier, and that would be a national tragedy.

The Bush administration should have interceded in this conflict by now. It affects millions of Americans, especially the poor and minorities.

If the Bush administration says that back pay doesn't have to be paid, the strikers will be blown out like the air controllers were by Reagan. If the administration rules for back pay (highly improbable), the company will close shop and everybody will lose. There has to be a negotiated settlement so that Curey, the workers and the society at large can all be winners. A Japanese economist recently said in a lecture at the University of Washington that if a group of Japanese businessmen bought the company, they would run it like an airline. That would necessitate dramatic fare increases, and the dispossessed and working class in America would find it prohibitive to ride the buses.

The administration's lack of moral conviction to step in and bring this to arbitration is now the real issue. Their hands-off policy will result in someone being a big loser.

Teddy Ray  
National Committee to Protect a  
National Bus Carrier  
Seattle

## Correction

The telephone number for the National AIDS Brigade given in "In Person" in *In These Times* Aug. 1, 1990 issue was incorrect. The number in Boston should be (617) 269-8236.

## SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander





By Elizabeth Kaplan

**W**HILE THE SENATE WRANGLING OVER acid rain, ozone depletion and auto emissions, the garbage-incinerator lobby quietly slipped provisions into the Clean Air Act that give the industry greater protection than an endangered species. These provisions, adopted by voice vote in the waning hours of the Senate's Clean Air debate, read like an industry wish list. Specifically, they would:

- Exempt incinerators from the air-toxics provisions of the Clean Air Act and give the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) broad discretion in establishing emissions standards, with no minimum requirements for the large quantities of acid gases, heavy metals and organic compounds that are routinely discharged.

- Grant 30-year permits for incinerators, shielding them from the regular five-year permit cycle for all other sources of toxic air emissions—and from the costly retrofitting of outmoded pollution-control technology.

- Establish landfill standards for toxic incinerator ash that are weaker than those governing unburned household trash in New York, New Jersey and a number of other states.

- Direct the EPA to develop regulations over the next three years for "safe" uses for incinerator ash, in the meantime permitting its use as roadbed fill or in construction materials with no testing or treatment requirements.

- Set a token 25 percent recycling goal that can easily be waived for "economic reasons."

Sections 306 through 310 of the Senate bill would do much more than "give a green light to incineration," as Sen. Bob Dole declared in introducing them. They would remove all speed limits and traffic controls on the path to materials destruction.

"If the Clean Air Act is enacted with these provisions, it will encourage the widespread construction of incinerators, increase toxic pollution and undermine recycling in thousands of communities nationwide," warns Jane Nogaki, chairwoman of the New Jersey Environmental Federation, a coalition of more than 40 local grass-roots groups and a state chapter of Clean Water Action, a national citizens' organization that coordinated the recent National Citizens Lobby Day to Stop Incineration.

"These provisions are nothing more than a bailout for the incinerator industry," says Nogaki. "Because they are losing more and more at the local level, the incinerator industry has come to Congress for a handout, [and] the Senate gave them what they wanted."

The industry desperately needs such federal relief to thwart the progress being made by grass-roots groups that have persuaded communities across the country to reject incineration in favor of source reduction, recycling and composting. Fourteen incinerator projects have been blocked, closed, canceled or delayed in the last year alone, according to the Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste, one of several national grass-roots organizations that provide research and tactical support for local groups. Since June 1989, the number of

## Senate burns Clean Air Act with incinerator provisions



planned incinerators has been slashed nearly in half—from 96 to 49—while the number of incinerators under construction has sunk from 30 to 20.

Community activists have found their most powerful ally in the disastrous economics of the projects themselves. The standard incinerator contract guarantees hefty profits for the plant's builder and operator and virtually unlimited liability for the municipality. This means that taxpayers pick up the tab for the cost overruns, mechanical failures and pollution-control malfunctions that routinely plague mass-burn projects, wreaking havoc with initial budget projections and municipal tax rates.

The Dole amendment proposes to "cure" these ailing economics by removing the last vestige of regulatory and market discipline over incineration projects.

These dispensations are epitomized by the Senate provisions governing the disposal of toxic ash. Incinerator ash often contains such high concentrations of lead, cadmium, mercury and other toxic metals that it meets the qualifications of a hazardous waste. The prohibitive cost of disposing of this ash in a federally licensed hazardous-waste facility—as prescribed by the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)—is the industry's self-acknowledged Achilles-heel. When the Warren County, N.J., incinerator came on line in mid-1988, it was supposed to cost \$35 per ton to operate. Today, county officials are struggling to hold the line on a \$98-per-ton service fee, in part because the ash has tested hazardous almost 50 percent of the time. Shipping it to a hazardous-waste monofill in Buffalo, N.Y., costs an estimated \$300 per ton, triple or quadruple the price of landfilling ash that doesn't test hazardous.

The Senate bill dismantles the stiffer RCRA protections for hazardous-waste disposal by classifying incinerator ash as a "special waste" that can be buried in unlined landfills for two and a half years and in sanitary landfills for up to six years. Such "linguistic detoxification"—a phrase coined by Barry Commoner, director of the Center for the Biology of Natural Systems—will spawn the next generation of Superfund sites and the wholesale contamination of local groundwater.

**Heresy:** The Senate bill's recycling target is a frontal assault against rational solid-waste policies. Indeed, a negligible 25 per-

cent goal does more to entrench incineration as the option of choice than it does to promote recycling. It establishes an artificial—and ridiculously low—ceiling on the recovery of material resources, thereby containing the competitive threat of composting and recycling.

But the bill allows states to waive even this token recycling goal by claiming "lack of capacity or economic reasons." In the light of incineration's insulation from market forces, this attempt to wrap the "free market" flag around a paper-tiger recycling standard is perhaps the most pernicious hypocrisy in the Senate amendment.

Markets for recycled products can be stimulated through a coordinated program of government purchasing policies, taxes on the use of virgin materials, tax credits for using recyclables and direct subsidies. But apparently it is heresy to suggest that government "subsidize" the public's interest in protecting our resources—the prerequisite for both a sustainable economy and a sustainable environment. Meanwhile, it is perfectly acceptable to subsidize multimillion-dollar, vertically integrated waste-management conglomerates—and convicted polluters—such as Browning Ferris Industries Inc. and Waste Management Inc.

The standard incinerator contract is structured around a "put or pay" provision—or, more accurately, a "put and pay" provision—in which the municipality assumes all the costs of the facility (including construction, financing, operation and ash disposal) while guaranteeing a specific volume of garbage for combustion. If a munic-

ipality fails to meet its quota, it must pay for the shortfall. The incinerator company, meanwhile, is free to "import" trash to meet plant capacity—and reap additional profits from electricity sales, which are eligible for the guaranteed rate under the 1979 Public Utilities Regulatory Policy Act, despite the high cost of generating electricity from garbage.

**Déjà vu:** Soothed and intimidated by the industry's "state of the art" rhetoric, and desperate for a quick fix to the trash "crisis," local officials have eagerly ratified such agreements. If this scenario recalls the reckless embrace of another costly high-tech "solution" for an earlier "crisis," the sense of déjà vu is more than incidental. Many of the companies building incinerators are the same ones that feasted on the nuclear-plant binge of the '70s. The litany of cost overruns, expensive breakdowns and pollution-control malfunctions have followed these nuclear contractors into the incineration business.

The sweetheart deals also insulate incineration from competing "technologies." About 85 percent of the waste is either recyclable or compostable. But the massive commitment of political and financial capital to incineration—solidified by the "put or pay" provision—gives it a monopoly over the heavy and constant flow of trash it needs to operate profitably. Incinerators invariably cannibalize a community's recycling efforts. Since these contracts effectively penalize municipalities for not producing "enough" trash, they also undermine efforts at source reduction.

Thus, the Senate is now proposing to bail out an industry that is already a ward of the state. These amendments in the Clean Air Act perpetuate the industry's presumption of privilege by exempting incineration from a comprehensive examination of solid-waste management policy. On the federal level, the appropriate forum for this debate is clearly the reauthorization proceedings for the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, which deals with the entire scope of municipal waste.

The highly toxic Senate amendments must be excised from the Clean Air Act when the House-Senate conferees meet in September to hammer out the final version of the bill. Deleting them is the critical first step to leveling the public-policy playing field on behalf of source reduction, recycling and composting. □

Elizabeth Kaplan is a freelance writer based in Montclair, N.J., and a member of Eco-Alert, the Essex County Organization for Alternatives to Incineration.

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By Elie Chalala

**I**N A DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS OF ITS own, expedited by a deteriorating economic situation, Algeria experienced a popular uprising in October 1988 during which 150 to 300 youths lost their lives fighting the corruption and inefficiency of the country's ruling party, the National Liberation Front (NLF). A new constitution was approved by a popular vote in February 1989. Among the new constitutional rights the Algerian people enjoy are a multiparty system, individual freedoms and a limited right to strike. But the constitution's true test did not come until last June's elections, the freest in the modern history of Algeria, which had been ruled by an authoritarian regime for the last 28 years.

The June elections were marked by televised debates, demonstrations and street confrontations—at times violent—pitting the supporters of the NLF against its major rival, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), headed by Abassi al-Madani, a philosophy professor and president of the front. Several reformist political parties boycotted the elections. Of the 13 million eligible Algerian voters, only 60 percent participated.

The FIS was the major winner, garnering 65 percent of the popular vote. It also captured 32 out of the 48 provinces and won 55 percent of the municipal councils (853 out of 1,535), including the councils in Algiers, the capital. The NLF, on the other hand, came in a distant second, gaining only 14 provinces, while the two other provinces went to smaller parties.

Instead of accepting the results, Western reaction to the Islamic Front victory was alarm and even fear of an Algeria on its way toward becoming a "Khomeinist" Islamic republic. These concerns arise from expectations that democratic reform in Algeria should be a replay of events in Eastern Europe. Similarities do exist between the situation in Europe and in Third World countries, particularly the deteriorating economic conditions and failure of bureaucratically centralized economic systems. But the democratic movement in Algeria needs to be analyzed in its own historical context.

Algeria's colonial history deprived that country of the possibility of developing the social basis for democratically oriented social and political forces. Indigenous capitalist development was thwarted by French colonialists, who considered Algeria almost as part of metropolitan France and who subjected its whole economic life to French interests. National oppression and plunder had fomented discontent with France among Algerians and turned them to Islam, a force distinctly non-European.

These conditions are in stark contrast to Eastern Europe, and the Balkan states in particular, which became independent 100 years earlier than many Third World countries. The 19th century's phenomenal economic growth, for example, enabled many Balkan states to take advantage of free trade and lay down the basis for an infrastructure with a diverse class system and traditions that survived a 40-year system of bureaucratically centralized governments.

But when the Algerians waged their war of independence between 1954 and 1962, the Islamicists—in today's terminology, "fundamentalists"—played a key role in the

## Should West prepare for another Iran in Algeria?

resistance along with the nationalist and secularly oriented NLF. The nationalists and the secularists emerged triumphant over the Islamicists in the '60s largely because the nationalists shared in the momentum of nationalism in the Arab world, from which they received moral and material support.

**Still around:** But the Islamicists did not disappear after Algeria's independence. In fact, they gradually grew in strength in proportion to the NLF's corruption and inefficiency. That Islamicists—and not democratically oriented forces—emerged as an alternative to the NLF can also be attributed to the political and economic system adopted after Algerian independence. Ironically, the NLF policies had striking parallels with those of French colonialists, specifically in destroying any grounds that might have facilitated the emergence of democratically oriented forces. The NLF's centralized control over the economy did not correct social injustice but instead benefited a narrow "state bureaucracy" through bribery and commissions, a process that ultimately produced impoverishment rather than socialism.

The NLF's policies of economic and political repression ultimately worked to the benefit of the Islamicists, who—unlike the democratic forces that could have been empowered by economic and political freedoms—stood to survive the oppression through their religious institutions. Non-Islamic forces were either suppressed or forced into exile. Those who remained after the constitutional change that produced a multiparty system had been so severely weakened that they chose to boycott the election to save face under the pretext that the NLF planned to tamper with electoral results. The abstainers include the Populist Movement for Democracy, led by Ahmad Ben-Bella, a War of Independence hero and the first post-independence president (1963-65); and the Front of Socialist Forces, headed by Ayat Ahmad, also a legendary War of Independence figure. These two former NLF leaders have spent a good number of years in exile, where Ben-Bella still remains. Ayat Ahmad returned just a few months prior to the election.

**Another Iran?** Should the West be prepared for another Iran, as some Westerners suggest? Should we write off Algerian democratic and reformist forces? The severity of Algeria's social and economic problems makes an Islamic confrontation with the West unlikely. With a foreign debt of \$27 billion (equivalent to a \$1,000 debt for every Algerian citizen), the FIS' ability to sustain momentum is doubtful. Instead, the Islamicists must introduce changes in their declared intentions, adopting a pragmatic attitude toward the West and entering into alliances with reformist and democratic forces.

The evidence pointing in this direction is plentiful. The social and economic problems cannot be solved by forging an alliance between Islamicists and merchants supporting free trade and the market economy. These concepts are more attractive to

Western reporters than to the Algerian people, including a sizable portion of the people who supported the FIS. To keep its popular base in line while advocating a free market would be difficult at best. More likely is a rethinking of "Islamicist ideas" and strategies, a process that might place the FIS closer to some of the reformist and democratic groups than it was during the heights of the electoral campaigns.

The electoral process itself, the low vot-

ing turnout in particular, makes an imminent threat to the reformists and the democratic forces by the Islamicists a remote possibility. Whether one accepts the figure of those who boycotted the election as 40 percent (as widely reported in the West)

or 53 percent (as some Arab sources claim), the FIS mandate is weak. Besides the low turnout, some Arab observers suggest that the voting process itself was not free from intimidation and fraud—by the FIS as well as the NLF. According to one source, many women never saw a ballot box. The votes of entire families were cast by the father. Obviously, this could not have been done without the support of the FIS.

The constitutional and democratic changes that were forced upon the Algerian regime by a popular uprising created opportunities for both the FIS and the NLF. In order to survive as a credible political force, the NLF may now purge itself of those responsible for corruption, even if they happen to be in the upper echelons of government, abandon its elitist attitude toward the reformist and democratic forces and enter into an alliance with them.

Unless the Islamicists exercise intense pressure to dissolve the national assembly, the NLF could take advantage of the two years left of this institution's tenure to implement further reforms and cement new alliances to prevent the FIS from capturing the parliament in future elections. President Chadli Benjedid, whose tenure lasts until 1994 and who enjoys substantial constitutional powers, can also take certain initiatives to speed the reforms and halt the Islamicist momentum.

Elie Chalala is a lecturer at Santa Monica City College and a frequent writer on Middle Eastern affairs.

### Algeria's colonial history deprived that country of the possibility of developing the social basis for democratically oriented social and political forces.

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The Privatization of China,  
1978-1989**

By William Hinton  
Monthly Review Press  
191 pp., \$11.00

By Henry Rosemont Jr.

## The high price of privatization

**A**mericans of the present generation owe William Hinton the same gratitude their parents owed Edgar Snow for reporting on China. Both writers provided accounts of China's problems at wide variance with the anti-communist diatribes characteristic of the past two generations of journalists and scholars. As Snow's *Red Star Over China* gave a clear and detailed picture of the Communist Party's and the army's military and political struggles, so has Hinton, beginning with *Fanshen* (1966), given clear and detailed pictures of the party's and the peasant's economic and social struggles, especially since liberation in 1949.

Hinton's work should not be confined to sinophiles, however. His analyses and evaluations of the physical difficulties and moral dilemmas facing Chinese rural-development efforts have relevance in every poor country. Those concerned with peace and justice-issues on an international scale must ponder agricultural development, for poor peasants are not confined to China—they are more than half of humankind.

Moreover, Hinton's most recent book, *The Great Reversal*, is particularly timely—coming as it does in the midst of boardroom, governmental, and media celebrations of the "victory" of capitalism over socialism. *The Great Reversal* makes it clear that the capitalist privatization of agriculture that has gone on apace since 1979 isn't working and can't work in the future.

**Outstanding in the field:** *The Great Reversal* is a connected series of essays written over the past decade (some of them first appeared in the *Monthly Review*), during which Hinton spent four to six months of each year in the Chinese countryside—from the Shandong peninsula to Low Bow village in Shaanxi to the grasslands and farms of Inner Mongolia.

As the title indicates, what Hinton saw did not make him a supporter of Deng Xiaoping's "reform" policies. On the contrary, Hinton believes that privatization: 1) has not been the economic miracle it has been held up to be; 2) will, if maintained, have highly adverse economic consequences; and 3) has resulted directly in a number of social and ecological evils. His message is clear: while command economics may not have taken China to the Promised Land, the capitalist road will dead-end in the desert.

To be sure, crop yields began increasing after the "responsibility

system" was implemented, reaching a record-breaking 400 million long tons of rice in 1984. Hinton does not dispute the figure but points out that the reforms were not solely or even largely responsible for the bumper crop. The yield fell to about 370 million long tons the following year.

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with no inclement weather to blame. This leads Hinton to conclude that much grain had been taken out of collective storage in 1984 and hadn't actually been grown then. (The 1984 yield hasn't been equaled since then; indeed, China has been importing grain for the past two and a half years.)

A second reason for increased crop yields, having nothing to do with privatization, was the introduction of hybrid rice. These seeds were not available in China until the early '80s and obviously would have significantly increased crop yields under almost any system of agricultural production.

**Mixed (up) economy:** Even more important, according to Hinton, is the fact that rising yields are dependent on large-scale water-conservancy projects, but the dams, dikes and irrigation systems were largely constructed before capitalist efforts began, i.e., they were built during the Great Leap Forward and

the Cultural Revolution. This raises some troubling questions:

"Can [water-conservancy projects] be carried out within the framework of the 'responsibility system'? Can funds be raised to pay people to do individually for cash what they once did collectively for work points? In the past people invested their labor on projects that promised future benefit. They reaped the return months or even years later. Now peasants demand payment by the day or by the month. Where will the necessary funds come from?"

No good answers to these questions will be forthcoming, Hinton implies, but the questions must be addressed, because the past decade's economic advances cannot be sustained. He writes of the "noodle land" now descriptive of much of rural China, land divided into long private strips so narrow a cart cannot be driven along one's own plot without trespassing on a neighbor's. With such crazy-quilt patterns of land distribution there is no hope of ever mechanizing agricultural production. But without some mechanization, Hinton argues, the vast majority of China's 800 million peasants are doomed to hard, bitter and impoverished lives. (Although the figure is not mentioned in *The Great Reversal*, the average annual income for Chinese peasants in 1988 was U.S.

\$110).

He compares the productivity of a farmer from his native Pennsylvania with the productivity of a farmer in an advanced Shandong village, and the comparisons are dispiriting: one Pennsylvanian can till anywhere from 142 to 405 times as much land as his Chinese counterpart, with comparable yields; one day's labor by a Pennsylvanian produces from 213 to 438 times as much grain as one day's labor from the Shandong villager.

**Back to the pasture:** Many social costs have also been paid since the introduction of rugged individualism into the Chinese countryside. In addition to the predictable evils of increasing class divisions, gross inequalities in standards of living and the exploitation of labor, havoc has been wrought on birth-control policies as land-hungry peasants seek more children to help in the fields. Once born, the children do indeed go to the fields, evidenced by a steady decline in school attendance in rural areas over the past several years. Crime is on the rise, and an already greatly endangered environment is being further despoiled in the search for quick profits. (Other social costs of the "reforms" are described in *ITT*, July 19, 1989).

In cataloging these horrors Hinton

### Chinese rural development difficulties have relevance in every poor country.

Deng Xiaoping's "reforms" are no economic miracle



ton is not attempting to vindicate the Cultural Revolution. He has himself recorded the enormous physical and psychological price the Chinese paid for the party's policies during that period in *Shen-fan* (1984). But he is struggling against the backlash to that period, claiming that the baby has been thrown out with the bathwater. His own estimate is that during the years 1967 to 1976, economic conditions improved consistently and considerably in about 30 percent of the rural areas, remained about the same in 40 percent and worsened in the other 30 percent. These figures clearly indicate that if privatization policies were to be established, they should have been implemented at the request of the peasants in those areas where collectivization wasn't an effective means of raising living standards.

But Deng's commandism required privatization for all Chinese agriculture, whether the peasants wanted it or not, and Hinton points out—contrary to a rather fundamental assumption of capitalist theory—that many peasants did not. While believing that the state must stand ready to provide resources as needed to rural areas, Hinton nevertheless attacks party and governmental commandism to the point where readers can easily conclude that a much more decentralized China might be a much better China, especially against the background of the terror unleashed in Beijing last June 4th (which Hinton, who was there at the time, describes in his concluding essay).

In sum, *The Great Reversal* is required reading for everyone thinking about or rethinking such concepts as democracy, freedom, modernization and international economic and social justice. Bringing us beyond Tiananmen, the book portrays a China currently occupying the worst of all possible worlds, a world that combines the manifold evils of capitalism and most of the excesses of Stalinist "socialism" with the benefits of neither.

But despite his increasing years (he first went to the Chinese village of Long Bow in the '40s), William Hinton is not a pessimist. He has not and will not surrender the dreams of a better world. He closes the introduction to this tough-minded yet tender-hearted, most useful book with a ringing call to action addressed first, but not only, to the Chinese:

"People must confront and expose the pseudosocialist rhetoric that now, more than ever, masks the capitalist road, make some clear choices in favor of renewed, self-reliant socialist transformation and prepare for protracted struggle." ■

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**Encyclopedia of the American Left**  
 Edited by Mari Jo Buhle,  
 Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas  
 Garland Publishing  
 962 pp., \$95.00

By William E. Cain

**T**HIS SUPERB, INDEED INDISPENSABLE, reference work on the American left contains clearly written, detailed entries on major and minor figures, movements, parties, sects, journals, magazines, trade unions and tendencies in literature and the arts. But it is more than just a handy tool for scholars, teachers and students. The *Encyclopedia* is also a source of

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knowledge and inspiration for everybody who cares about the past and present of the American left and is committed to its future.

The *Encyclopedia* is the first volume of its kind, and it displays to a great advantage the exceptional learning and expert editorial labor of Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas. The editors have been very attentive to pluralist goals and values, and thus have made a special effort to include much informative, illuminating material on racial and ethnic groups, popular culture and women. The book in general draws upon and exemplifies the openness and diversity of the new social history that emerged in the 1960s. The sheer range of the *Encyclopedia's* coverage—enriched by more than 90 excellent illustrations, a helpful glossary of terms and name and subject indices—is extraordinary.

No doubt most readers will consult the *Encyclopedia* when they

# The left-handed complement from A to Z



Eugene Debs, shown here in prison, is in good company in a new encyclopedia.

need a reliable account of, for example, Debs, Goldman or Haywood, or when they want a lucid overview of the Communist Party of the United States or one of its innumerable offshoots or rival factions. But this is also a book through which readers can profitably wander, benefiting both from the sharply written,

lengthy entries on familiar topics (e.g., McCarthyism, proletarian and radical authors, the New Left) and from the vast number of rewarding entries on less-familiar yet highly significant labor leaders, magazines and radical organizations.

**Listing to the left:** It's no exaggeration to say that the *Encyclopedia*

also merits a systematic reading, from A to Z. If you begin at the beginning, you'll find entries on abortion, reproductive rights, Abraham Lincoln Brigade, *L'Adunata dei Refrattari* (an Italian-language anarchist journal), African studies, agrarian radicalism, Nelson Algren, Saul Alinsky, Allerton Avenue "Coops" (a radical housing complex established in New York in the 1920s), Allis-Chalmers strike, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, *Amerasia* (a

## The *Encyclopedia* is an important political statement in its own right.

journal devoted to America and the Far East that ran from 1937 to 1947), American Committee for Protection of Foreign Born, American exceptionalism, American Indian Movement, American Labor Party, American League Against War and Fascism, American Negro Labor Congress, American Slav Congress, American Soviet Friendship and much, much more, ending with entries on atheism and Attica.

The *Encyclopedia's* breadth sometimes means that the contributors cannot really delve into the full complexity of a topic. Indeed, the first-rate treatment of the cultural criticism of the utopian socialist Edward Bellamy makes a few of the other entries appear a bit thin intellectually and too confined

to a review of key facts.

Some readers will also regret that there are not convenient separate entries for Sherwood Anderson, James Rorty, Dorothy Day, Jane Addams, Philip Rahv, Theodore Dreiser, Randolph Bourne, Walter Lippmann, Van Wyck Brooks, the black socialist preacher G.W. Woodbey and Martin Luther King Jr., among others. But, fortunately, nearly all of these figures are covered at some point, and the editors do emphasize in their introduction that they have preferred to highlight individuals within the context of larger political events and contexts.

While the *Encyclopedia's* central aim is to supply guidance and instruction about the American left, the book is an important political statement in its own right. The editors and the contributors declare through their work that, contrary to received wisdom, there is (and has long been) an American left, and they demonstrate that it has waged and often won arduous battles on behalf of workers, women and minorities. It has survived despite internal differences and controversies, and despite constant harassment and persecution at the hands of local, state and federal authorities.

Appearing at a moment of uncertainty among many on the left, the *Encyclopedia* reminds us of the impressive contribution, against formidable odds, that the left has made to American society and culture.

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### Lantern Slides

By Edna O'Brien  
 Farrar, Straus and Giroux  
 256 pp., \$18.95

By Eleanor J. Bader

**E**DNA O'BRIEN'S *LANTERN SLIDES* is like a fictional rendering of the Beatle's "Eleanor Rigby." Like the song, this collection of 12 short stories forces us to question the lives of all the lonely people, and wonder aloud about the whys and hows that left them so bereft, alienated and alone.

In the title story, for example, a group of middle-class adults gather at a surprise party for Betty, a woman whose husband of many years has left her. While waiting for the guest of honor to arrive, individuals flirt, fight and finagle gossip from one another. The air comes alive with sexual tension. O'Brien is at her best when describing the contradictory poles that war inside particular protagonists. Sinead, for one, sounds like a soapbox orator when she abruptly announces that "the ladies would like a bit of stimulating conversation—they had not come to a party to be treated like ornaments,

## Out at the end of Lonely Street

as was the case with most women in Ireland. She added that though they were treated like pieces of china at a party, they were frequently 'knocked about' at home."

But this is just one side of Sinead. She is also desperate to remarry, and hopes to lure the chauvinistic Dr.

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Fitz by becoming pregnant. "Yes, a baby would settle him, preferably a boy," she thinks, and we are left to acknowledge the complexity of gender relations and ponder how far we have yet to go before feminism transforms both the personal and the political.

Contradictory impulses also do battle in the touching "What a Sky." Here, a daughter visits her aging father in a nursing home. Listening to the same stories again and again is depressing, enraging. What the daughter craves, of course, is mean-

ingful talk, talk that bridges the chasms of family dysfunction and allows tensions to dissipate. In her fantasy of father-daughter friendship, she is able to ask the questions that have long begged for answers.

But in real-life she is stuck, left tongue-tied and choked, to repeat her lines in a by-now-rote conversation. In the end, "as she rises to leave, she feels that her heart is in shreds, all over the room. She has left it in his keeping, but he is wildly, helplessly looking for his own."

**Shattered propriety:** Set largely in small-town Britain and Ireland, O'Brien's stories are incredibly well crafted and evocative. Whether she is describing a woman's descent into madness in "Oft in the Stilly Night," or Maisie's incestuous love for Matt in "Brother," she tackles social issues with finesse, grace and a lightness of touch that is refreshing and thought-provoking.

In "A Demon," young Nancy leaves

a religious boarding school due to illness. Within hours of arriving home she is consumed by pain, pain she attributes to appendicitis. Meg, the younger sister, isn't sure about Nancy's self-diagnosis. In fact, she wonders about Nancy's girth, noting that her sister's "tummy was like a little barrel. She thought it odd for a sick girl to have such a corporation." Meg puts water on to boil as Nancy's cries become more and more piercing. Propriety is shattered, and we are left to imagine what happens when a baby is born to an unmarried teen in an extremely religious Roman Catholic household.

Repressed sexuality also takes center stage in "Dramas," a look at small-town homophobia and individual complicity in maintaining the status quo. And, obsessive heterosexual love between a married man

## O'Brien has a keen eye for the details of everyday life.

and a single woman is chronicled, in "Epitaph," an emotionally exhausting story of an on-again-off-again tryst that is destined to end badly.

O'Brien has a keen eye for detail and is an astute observer of everyday life. With a poetic touch, she provides the reader with an insightful look at people in trouble, people alone to make their way in the world. While many of the stories are profoundly sad, her writing is so perceptive and bold that one cannot help wanting more, and soon.

*Lantern Slides* makes us face the reality of unchosen solitude and grapple with who we are and how we form relationships. While not always easy or comfortable, these tasks summon our courage and integrity and help us separate real from imagined options. By homing in on our foibles and failures, O'Brien spotlights the need for open lines of communications—woman to man, parent to child, lover to lover, co-worker to co-worker. It is a reminder we should be grateful for and carefully consider.

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**Mo' Better Blues**  
Directed by Spike Lee

By Patrick Z. McGavin

**A**BSURDLY POISED BETWEEN idolatry and condemnation, the widely disparate reactions to Spike Lee's work signal his films' complexity and beauty. Unlike Peter Greenaway's

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diagrammatic movies, which exact a singular, unchanged response, a Spike Lee movie leaves no two viewers feeling precisely the same way. That's especially true of Lee's latest, the contemporary jazz film *Mo' Better Blues*. It's idiosyncratic and accomplished, yet contradictory and problematic.

Lee's career is bound to the formidable artistry of *Do the Right Thing*, against which all of his subsequent work will be judged, and *Mo' Better Blues* is a significant thematic and stylistic departure. The movie lacks *Do the Right Thing*'s compression, intensity and concentration and is characterized by an entirely different psychological landscape.

*Do the Right Thing* was motivated by external factors. This film is inner-driven, contemplative and introspective in the very casual and specific ways it captures the life of an artist. Viewed in relation to the director's other films, *Mo' Better Blues* is a means of self-examination, and the autobiographical flourishes connect the material emotionally. As *In These Times* senior editor Salim Muwakkil has forcefully argued, Lee's volatile political conceits spring from a refusal to leave buried African-American taboos.

As the first black American film-



Splitting images: Denzel Washington with Cynda Williams and Joie Lee.

## Blue notes: working through the changes

maker given the autonomy to shape his film persona, Lee leaves nothing to chance.

**Bleek house:** In *Mo' Better Blues* Denzel Washington stars as Bleek Gilliam, a gifted, uncompromising New York jazz trumpeter who pursues his art with a near-mystical, controlled fervor. With his band, the Bleek Quintet, he plays every night in the atmospheric nightclub Beneath the Underdog. He is composed, absorbed and closed-off. "You still don't know what you want," one of his lovers tells him. Replies Bleek, "I know what I want—my music. Everything else is secondary."

All of Lee's films are on a basic level about competition, and the

loose, discursive way the early scenes unfold, building on the rivalries and disputes involving girlfriends and money, reveals Lee's gift for the short form. These incidental, fluid scenes swerve between put-down and a peculiar bonding. They give the backstage milieu a funny, pure grace and verisimilitude. The band members are played by Lee regulars Giancarlo Esposito, Bill Nunn and Jeff Watts.

Bleek clashes with Shadow (Wesley Snipes), the group's independent saxophonist, over the musical arrangement, the leadership of the band and Bleek's disastrous loyalty to childhood friend Giant (Lee), an ineffectual manager and gambler who's locked them into an unfair

contract with the club owners. Bleek indifferently romances two women, the aspiring jazz singer Clarke (Cynda Williams) and school teacher Indigo (Joie Lee). They actively seek some vague promise of commitment, one Bleek steadfastly refuses.

*Mo' Better Blues* is a beautiful film to watch, at times an astonishing symphony of music, movement, sexuality and, finally, a moving meditation on the ramifications of being an artist. The sensuous imagery found in the opening credits, pans and rushes of a trumpet, lips and hands is overpowering. Stylistically, this is Lee's most experimental feature to date. Working with the brilliant director of photography Ernest Dickerson, they're shooting longer, unbroken takes using expressive, sophisticated camera angles and a deep-toned, stunning color saturation.

**Juking the structure:** Of late, there appear touches of Godard in Lee's editing and construction, particularly in the repetition or "doubling" of scenes. In the film's best scene, Bleek cannot distinguish between Clarke and Indigo, and, through an innovative series of cuts and matching shots, Lee calls up the confusion, ending with Bleek's emotional isolation. To that end the entire structure, in effect a musician's rise, fall and recovery, is conventionally laid out but attacked and overhauled from within.

Yet for all the innovation, there is something curiously reserved about the film, seen mostly in Washington's unconvincing performance. And Lee's direction lacks confidence during the musical numbers, when he cuts too quickly or nervously.

You're never certain that Bleek's music (dubbed by Terence Blanchard) constitutes an actual obsession, as the screenplay zealously

proclaims. In a prologue, Bleek's mother literally wills him into playing. More problematic is Bill Lee's score and Spike's deployment of the music. The musical selections are rather functional, a restrained mix of Miles Davis, John Coltrane and the Branford Marsalis Quartet.

Paradoxically, *Mo' Better Blues* is in some ways Lee's most conservative film, and the ending seems to argue in favor of social and family order over artistic expression. Lee hasn't begun to resolve some of the tension and violence directed at women in his own works, an inability to view women outside of traditional roles. The film isn't as tight as it should be, and weird inside jokes about Arsenio Hall and the Mets' nearly all-white roster detract from the film's energy and authenticity.

But the film is Lee's most personal and can be seen as auto-critique, with jazz as a substitute for filmmaking, fueling an open-ended discussion of art and commerce, creativity and responsibility and the corruption of the artist. It represents a progression of sorts, especially in its unabashed celebration of sexuality. On a sad note, it's the last opportunity to see Robin Harris (Sweet Dick Willie in *Do the Right Thing*), the hysterically funny stand-up comedian and actor who died last March of heart failure. There is something bold and subversive about Harris that Lee tapped into, that brought out the best qualities of each other's work.

*Mo' Better Blues* doesn't soar the way it might have. Yet in no way does it betray Spike Lee's talents. On the contrary, whatever its flaws, the movie resolutely stands on its own.

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**Epitaph**  
Charles Mingus  
Columbia Records

By Dean Robbins

**C**HARLES MINGUS DEMANDED OUR full attention. He lectured impolite audiences from the stage, he wrote scathing liner notes for his albums, he aired his views on whiteness in an outrageous autobiography. Now, perhaps, the incomparable jazz bassist is making his most extravagant claim on our ears: he's speaking to us from the grave.

In 1985, while cataloging Mingus' musical manuscripts, a researcher discovered the score of *Epitaph*, an extended work for jazz orchestra. Mingus performed a version of the piece in 1962, but, for many reasons beyond his control, it failed disastrously. (Disgusted, he urged the audience to demand their money back). The piece never had another hearing before Mingus' death in 20 IN THESE TIMES AUG. 15-28, 1990

## Muddled *Epitaph* misses that Mingus kick

1979, and he bitterly referred to it as "music for my tombstone."

The score that surfaced in 1985 was a mess: frayed, smudged, in-

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complete. Enter Gunther Schuller, jazz historian and longtime friend of Mingus. Schuller reconstructed the score (adding transitions as necessary) and assembled a 30-piece orchestra to perform it last year at New York's Lincoln Center. The two-hour concert was recorded, and now we can all make a long-overdue pilgrimage to Charles Mingus' tombstone.

*Epitaph* is such an important recording that every jazz fan will want to hear it. On the other hand, it's such a problematic recording that every jazz fan will probably be dis-

appointed by it. Gunther Schuller obviously wasn't the best man for the job.

Unfortunately, the best man for the job—the only man for the job—is Charles Mingus himself. Mingus' music (like that of his idol, Duke Ellington) meant nothing on paper. It was art conceived in the glare of the spotlight, with the composer shouting directions from his bass. For all Schuller's careful reconstruction, he can't simulate Mingus' on-the-spot intuition or explosive presence. The Lincoln Center performance is sluggish—something Mingus would never have tolerated. Schuller was probably too polite to kick any of his musicians in the ass.

Worse, Schuller didn't even have the right musicians to kick. Mingus loved one-of-a-kind jazz soloists, and he wrote *Epitaph* for 30 hand-

picked collaborators. His score is filled with intimate notes to Jimmy Knepper, Eric Dolphy and other old associates. In drummer Danny Richmond's part, he writes, "same as 1942 Club Downbeat," and "use your ear and know where the old folk's beat is, and you're cool." To trumpeter Clark Terry, he says, "Duke's band, remember?"

Schuller has some topnotch replacements for Terry et al. (including Wynton Marsalis and John Handy), but they don't understand what the hell Mingus is talking

**Epitaph is a recording that all jazz fans will want to hear. Yet every fan will probably also be disappointed by it.**

about. In the absence of anyone who really remembers what happened in "1942 Club Downbeat," the solos fall flat.

Occasionally, the recording does catch the great man's spirit. You sense Mingus' epic energy in "Better Get It in Your Soul," his urbane wit in "Monk, Bunk and Vice Versa (Osmotin)," "Freedom" is a lyrical lament about American-style racism, hinting at the hurt just beneath Mingus' legendary hostility.

In *Epitaph*, Mingus' hurt takes the form of Dixieland, gospel, blues, bebop and contemporary art music; you feel as if you're in the middle of the composer's subconscious, with a dozen voices jabbering all at once. Who could possibly focus such a thing but Mingus himself? He'd probably hate this soupy performance—although it's not at all unpleasant to imagine him hating it, chiding the musicians or even giving Schuller a ghostly kick in the ass.

Dean Robbins is a widely published jazz critic living in Madison, Wis.



By Pat Aufderheide

# World Beat keeps on turning for Lord Nelson

By J. Poet

**N**ELSON, AKA LORD NELSON, HAS been a major composer of calypsos since the late '60s. Some people even say he invented soca, the mixture of calypso, funk and other North American and Caribbean pop forms that currently dominates Trinidad's Carnival scene, but he modestly denies the claim.

"Although I was born in Tobago, I moved to Brooklyn and became a U.S. citizen when I was a teenager, so it was natural that R&B and Latin music would creep into my songs," Nelson says. "But I don't think any one person can take the credit for inventing soca. In the late '70s many singers experimented with other rhythms—reggae, zouk, funk and sounds from Africa. I like to say we all did it together. However, when people talk about the evolution of the music they all mention Nelson, and that *does* make me happy."

**Over here, over there:** Nelson was born in Plymouth, a town of about 3,000, the youngest in a family of nine children. "At that time there was no radio on the island, so my mother used to sing me to sleep with the calypso songs she knew. And my father like church music. He had a strong voice, and although he loved hymns, he liked to sing humorous songs too."

After finishing high school, Nelson came to the States to seek his fortune, but six weeks after entering the country he was drafted and sent to Korea.

"I started singing in Army shows," Nelson recalls, "and found out I had a gift for it." After his discharge in the late '50s, Nelson sang with local steel bands in Brooklyn. "We did covers of the popular calypsos of the day, but since I hadn't been back [to Trinidad and Tobago] in years I had my own way of doing the songs."

After Nelson was introduced to calypso legend Duke, he began to

compose his own tunes. "I admired Duke's style, and he was very helpful to me," Nelson says. "He taught me how to construct a melody and how to write a strong lyric." Nelson said that Duke also encouraged him to develop his own style. "I listened to jazz, soul and rock'n'roll, so my phrasing was different than that of the other singers. Some people thought it was strange, but Duke

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told me I shouldn't change it."

As a musician, Nelson is entirely self-taught. "After I began writing I did take one guitar lesson, and the teacher told me—'Man, you do everything wrong. You sing in a minor and play in a major and use notes the wrong way, but somehow it sounds right.' He told me I might ruin my style if I learned the right way to play, so I decided to forget about the lessons."

Nelson's early compositions "King Liar," "Mi Lover" and "Garrot Bounce" drew on his love of soul, rock and church music, as well as calypso and African roots. And although they were huge hits in Trinidad and internationally, Nelson had become an American citizen and so wasn't allowed to compete in the yearly contests for Carnival King.

"My birth certificate says 'Tobago,'" Nelson says, "but since I lived in the U.S. I was considered a foreigner. There's a lot of jealousy in Trinidad. They don't let singers from other islands or countries take part, no matter how talented they are, but in the long run it's worked in my favor. I took calypso all over the world—South America, Canada, Europe, places where other singers never went. And as I traveled, I heard music that I wanted to use in my songs, making me a more international composer."

**Opening act, opening doors:** Last year Nelson was finally vindicated when he won the title of

Trinidad's Uncrowned King of Calypso in a special competition, but the years he spent outside the mainstream of calypso culture didn't damage his career. He's one of the few calypsonians to headline the Apollo, and he's opened shows for pop and reggae acts like Kool and The Gang, Billy Ocean and Third World.

"I find all black music inspiring—rap, funk, African—anything with a good backbeat. If I get people dancing to it, they'll relate to me."

Nelson also says that the growing interest in world music is a potential gold mine if calypso artists can learn to take advantage of it. "For some reason, soca has chosen to stay isolated from the rest of the world. Many producers have limited vision, and there's often competition instead of co-operation."

"But interest in African and Caribbean music is growing. In the last year I've played in France, Germany, England, Sweden [where Nelson's "Disco Daddy" was a recent No. 1 hit], and everywhere I feel a change. If they don't know English, they sing back to me in their own language."

With the exception of Arrow, another Carnival outcast who records for Mango Island, Nelson is the only soca artist currently recording for a label outside of the calypso community. When *The World Turns Around*, his latest album, is an invigorating mix of rap, funk, rock, reggae and smokin' soca, the first of five that the singer will cut for Shanachie, a leading world-beat label.

"They're small, but they're an international company, and they're known for world music so they can help me expand my audience," Nelson says. "My arranger, Clive Bradley has played in jazz bands, and he's very progressive. I like youthful music—rap, rock'n'roll, reggae—and [Bradley] helps me keep the sound fresh."

"Looking back, I can see I was lucky. Because I wasn't allowed to play in Trinidad, I had to become a citizen of the world. Now that people are interested in world beat, I have a head start."

J. Poet is critic living in Berkeley.

## Party time

The television networks have nearly doubled the amount of time their news broadcasts spend on entertainment news in the last two years. And such infotainment has taken an especially big leap recently. Could the push have anything to do with the need to pull in viewers with glitz? Of course not, says ABC news head Steve Friedman. The problem is the collapse of the Cold War threat. "A lot of what we used to do is report on the back and forth of how we stood against the Russians," he told *Variety*. "But there is no back and forth anymore. I mean nobody is talking about the bomb, so you have to fill the time with the things people are talking about." Like the opening of another amusement park in Florida, for instance.

## Are we having fun yet?

It just may be that the key to the American pocketbook is not through advertising alone. In fact, the fabulous studio spending on this summer's movie fun may be the last big splash out of Hollywood for a while, if dismal returns keep coming in. Of the eight big-spender movies released this summer, only three (*Total Recall*, *Die Hard 2*, *Dick Tracy*) are making any money. And none of them is making *Batman*-style profits, even though each had promotions budgets larger than the average cost of a movie today. Unfortunately, the historic cycle of big-budget films in Hollywood usually crashes with a recession.

## Round-the-clock indecency

Government agencies all seem to be on the march against indecency, just at the moment that every commercial medium seems determined to find new ways to titillate consumer taste. News of a cowering National Endowment for the Arts and a Louisiana law mandating record-labeling has been followed by a renewed indecency ban on the airwaves. The Federal Communications Commission, which initiated a stiffened rule on "indecency" in broadcasting in the Reagan era, has now decided that a 24-hour ban, mandated in 1988 legislation, is constitutional. A year and a half ago, an appeals court suspended the ban until the FCC could justify it. Both broadcasters and Action for Children's Television oppose the ban, partly because the FCC won't say just what it means by "indecency." That leaves broadcasters to err on the side of caution—another way to say "auto-censorship." The FCC's decision will now probably go back to the courts. In the meantime, the airwaves will probably be safe enough for Jesse Helms (R-NC), the ban's strongest backer.

## Sacred cows herd

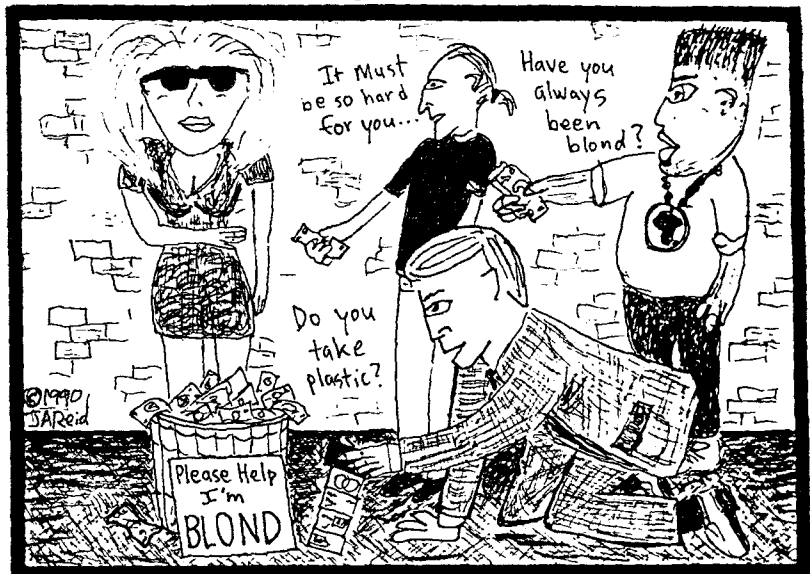
In an impassioned indictment of commercial TV news today, Lawrence Grossman—ex-PBS head, now ex-NBC news head—also called into question one of the most sacred cows in modern journalism: objectivity. In a speech at the Edward R. Murrow School of Communications at Washington State University (later published in part in the *Columbia Journalism Review*), Grossman asked what he called "a heretical question: whether our long-term, unquestioned standards of balanced, measured, dispassionate reporting, that is, without a personal point of view, has made television news bland, dull and largely unimportant in people's lives." Network news could recapture some of the "intensity, idealism and controversy" of the old, feisty partisan press if it would feature "strongly held ideas and differing convictions about major issues of public policy, in place of the softness and happy talk that pervade our airwaves today." Among his other suggested reforms: slap a tax on commercial broadcasting to decently fund public broadcasting and break down media conglomerates with anti-trust laws.

## Balking head

If anyone could testify to Grossman's bland/dull/happy talk charges, it's Fred Graham, whose *Happy Talk: Confessions of a TV Newsmen* (Norton, \$19.95) is an eye-opening tell-all. Graham was a lawyer who became a *New York Times* legal correspondent and then a network correspondent before budget cuts drove him back to his hometown of Nashville to work as a local anchor. Each career step brought him farther from his journalistic ideals and deeper into the corporate-led mire of lightweight entertainment masquerading as news. Graham still hasn't lost his idealism—now he's putting together a cable channel dedicated to covering trials—but his anger often pops through in this brisk, anecdotal account that is a mini-history of the decline of television news.

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## Male Blonding



Rough  
cuts  
BY  
J. Poet



# Grove

Continued from page 24

140 books under contract.

Payton, who comes from the Getty's financial advisory team, has been in publishing a year, long enough to marvel at the industry's threshing machine of rumor and gossip. Lord Weidenfeld and Ann Getty still get along fine, he says. The royalties went out late due to a switchover in computer software. The booksellers, rather than grumbling about Grove's absence at their convention, have been their biggest supporters.

**Revolutionary CEO:** "I heard directly from booksellers from San Francisco to New York: 'You can not sell that company. We're tired of smaller houses being gobbled up by the large conglomerates and international corporations,'" Payton says. "The company has never made money, and that was never Mrs. Getty's intention. She bought this company because she loves books, and she wanted to put literary books out in the marketplace," says Payton.

Though this soft-spoken young CEO wears a banker's red tie and blue suspenders, he happens to be uttering some pretty revolutionary words by the standard of the New York book business these days. This past spring the editors who resigned in protest from Pantheon were openly derided by many in the industry for suggesting similar things.

After an author protest rally on their behalf, one Random House executive wrote in a *New York Times* op-ed column, "It was pathetic, this rally in support of the welfare mentality...In their disavowal of the bottom line ('cultural treasure cannot be toted up on any bottom line'), the resignees have es-

chewed any notion of self-reliance and responsibility." An owner like Random House's S.I. Newhouse inspires that kind of neo-Darwinian bombast, not Ann Getty. The book establishment may be dubious about Grove Weidenfeld's good intentions, but the read-

ing public should give them half a chance. "It's not surprising to me that agents who got fat advances don't believe in the new Grove yet. The trough they marched to has shut," says Glenn Young, publisher of Applause Theater Books, which distributes

its book through Grove. "I have the very solid impression they will reclaim the original mandate of Grove Press. It's a very big plus for the industry." Will Nixon is a writer living in Hoboken, New Jersey.

## C A L E N D A R

Use the Calendar to announce conferences, lectures, films, events, etc. The cost is **\$25.00 for one insertion, \$35.00 for two insertions and \$15.00 for each additional insert**, for copy of 50 words or less (additional words are 50¢ each). Payment must accompany your announcement, and should be sent to the attention of **ITT Calendar**.

### MEADVILLE, PA August 16-19

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RED OAK CONFERENCE at Camp Keewano. Workshops: Electoral Politics, National Health, Native Americans, Reproductive Rights, The Labor Movement, Socialist Ecology, The Market in a Planned Society; music, poetry, oral history. For information: Socialist Party USA, 516 W. 25th St., New York, NY 10001, (212) 691-0776 or (616) 861-5505.

### ROCK HILL, NY August 23-26

WORKING PEOPLE AND THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT: Union for Radical Political Economics 1990 Summer Conference at Camp Sequoia in Rock Hill, NY (2 hours from New York City). PLENARY SESSIONS: Ecology and the Left, Eastern Europe: The Road to What?, The Health Care Crisis and AIDS, The Assault on African-American Communities and the Resistance. Speakers include: Jens Christiansen, Ward Churchill, Alexander Cockburn, Phil Hill, Ynestra King, Joanne Landy, Harry Magdoff, Barbara

Omolade, Stephanie Poggi, Yolanda Serrano. CLASSES: "Gender Analysis," Teresa Amott; "Popular Economics," The Center for Popular Economics; "Labor History," Dana Frank; "Choosing Class and Over-Determination: New Directions in Marxian Economics," Richard Wolff and Stephen Resnick. Cultural, recreational activity and childcare included. Write: URPE National Office, Dept. of Economics, University of California, Riverside, CA 92521, or phone (714) 787-3538.

### TOWSON, MD August 31

FIFTH NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CAMPUS VIOLENCE in 1991 presentation proposal deadline. Sponsored by Towson State University Center for the Study and Prevention of Campus Violence. For more information, write CSP Campus Violence, Towson State University, Towson, MD 21204, (301) 830-2178.

### SALT LAKE CITY, UT September 1

WE NEVER FORGET JOE HILL, a commemoration and open-air concert marking the 75th anniversary of Hill's death at Sugar House Park, the grounds of the old Utah State penitentiary and site of Hill's execution. The concert is in association with the Labor Heritage Foundation and is sponsored by The Joe Hill Organizing Committee. For further information, contact the Committee at P.O. Box 1596, Sandy, Utah, 84091, (801) 272-8762.

### NEW YORK, NY September 30

AMS ICA AIMS HISTORY PROJECT. Medical student and house staff activists from the 1930s and 1940s will gather for a daylong reunion and conference. In addition to reminiscing, they will evaluate and discuss the significance of this exciting and productive movement and its lessons for health activism today.

Interested health professionals, students and other non-alumni are also welcome. Information is available from Walter J. Lear, MD, Reunion Conference Coordinator, Institute of Social Medicine and Community Health, 206 N. 35th St., Philadelphia, PA 19104, (215) 386-5327.

### TUCSON, AZ October 16-18

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### MINNEAPOLIS, MN November 9-12

CREATING CHANGE, the third annual conference of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, will be held at the Holiday Inn Metrodome. Highlights are the Fundraising Institute and the People of Color Institute. Registration is \$120 by Sept. 14, \$150 after. For registration forms and more information on NGLTF Cooperating Organization rates, limited income rates and the conference in general, contact NGLTF, 1517 U St. NW, Washington, DC 20009, Attn: Creating Change. (202) 332-6483.

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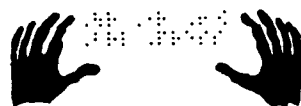
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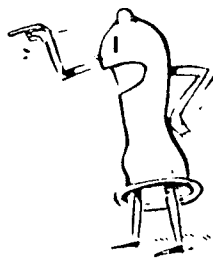
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# Making

# book

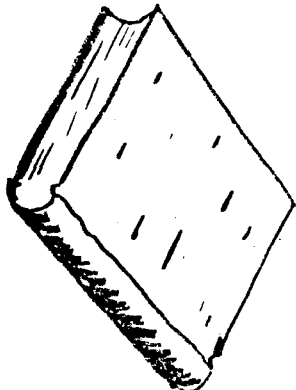
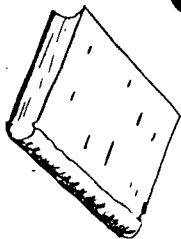
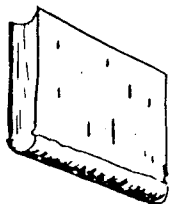
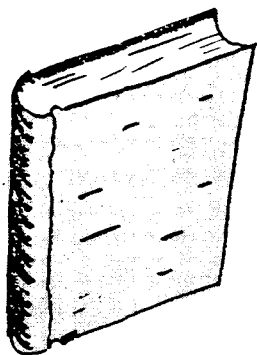
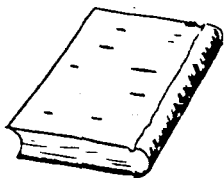
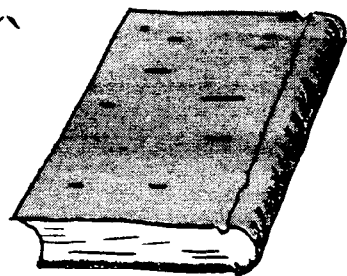
By Will Nixon

# on

# Grove

# Weidenfeld's

# future



**A**T THREE IN THE MORNING ON JULY 26, 1968, a passing pickup truck fired a fragmentation grenade through the second-story window of Grove Press in Greenwich Village. The explosion made a shambles of the company's production department, leaving heaps of shattered glass and plaster everywhere and blowing a crater in the floor that opened a view of the dry cleaners downstairs. The bombers were anti-Castro Cubans angry at an issue of the *Evergreen Review* that had Che Guevara on the cover.

Grove proudly rode the zietgeist of the '60s, from *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* to *Naked Lunch*, but they paid for it. An assistant hired on the eve of the bombing never showed up again. The artwork for several books was destroyed. And owner Barney Rosset spent years futilely trying to pin some of the blame of the CIA.

After the events of this past spring, though, those start sounding like the good old days.

On March 9 Grove's current owner, Ann Getty, put the company up for public auction. The action came five years after she got into the book business with the spare change produced by her husband Gordon Getty's \$4 billion oil trust fund. To many in this generally low-budget industry she was an enigma, a nice woman who commuted from home in San Francisco on her own 727, someone with good intentions but little practical experience. "She was a little vague," says an author who met her several times. "But someone told me, 'You have to remember, she's always jet-lagged.'"

**The name game:** Getty joined up with Lord George Weidenfeld of the British house Weidenfeld & Nicholson, bankrolling his effort to open an American branch in 1985, several months after she'd bought Grove for \$2 million. Over the next few years they spent some extravagant sums, both on decorating their offices and on prestigious authors. They gave more than \$250,000 to David Leavitt, \$400,000 to Robert Stone, \$750,000 to Arthur Miller, and \$1 million to Milan Kundera—none of whom seemed likely to return that kind of money.

When their spending produced no best-sellers, they began to retrench in late 1988 by merging the two houses into Grove Weidenfeld. They fired several top executives, and others began leaving. The last link to the old Grove Press broke in March when Fred Jordan, who had been an editor there for 29 years, left to become publisher of Pantheon Books.

The day word appeared about Grove Weidenfeld's sale, 23 companies called for details. The company still has under contract some prestigious authors, such as Stone, Kundera, Alfred Kazin, and Harold Pinter, and it still has more than 500 works from those star-studded heydays: Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, Hubert Selby's *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, the writings of Eugene Ionesco and Samuel Beckett and a whole list of books once considered too outré or avant-garde by the major houses. (At its peak in the late 60s, Grove even owned a movie theater and a film distribution company that imported *I Am Curious Yellow*.)

Twelve groups submitted bids, including Rosset, who headed a group of four New York small presses with a plan to make Grove their superstation. They offered \$11.5 million, Rosset says, and didn't even make the first cut. Instead, the conglomerates competed: Simon & Schuster, Macmillan, Random House, Harper & Row, Penguin USA.

In late April word got out that Simon & Schuster, supposedly close to a deal, had nervously withdrawn after really digging into Grove's records. Now Penguin became the suitor, reportedly bidding \$7 million to \$9 million. The rumor spread that they didn't even want to keep Grove running, they just wanted the rights to all of its books. Where a bomb failed, a buyout would succeed.

On May 8th Getty suddenly called off the sale. Her press release said, "After hearing about the strong feeling among authors, agents and booksellers that we should not be swallowed up by a publishing conglomerate, I have become convinced that the best course is for Grove Weidenfeld to remain an independent publishing house dedicated to producing quality works."

**Stone turned:** Her sentiments are admirable, but some in the industry doubt they can amount to more than words. "To re-establish her credibility she's going to have to overpay for authors again, which is part of what got her in trouble last time," says someone involved with the aborted sale. And at least a few agents want books back from Grove. "I have asked for the rights to Robert Stone," says his representative, Candida Donadio. "I wouldn't dare run the risk of leaving him there with a major novel."

Indeed, Grove Weidenfeld did not seem to come off the May 8 announcement on the rebound. Their sales manager left. They had no booth at the American Booksellers Association Convention in early June. Their author royalty payments due out on April 30th didn't get mailed until late June. Their major book of the season, Christopher Ransymer's novel *The Last World*, has sold about 20,000 copies. That would be fine except they paid \$450,000 for it at the 1988 Frankfurt Book Fair, where it was touted as the next *The Name of the Rose*. "I'd say they're dysfunctional," says one former employee.

"What's being said now is one-tenth of what was being said a month ago," insists the company's young CEO, Patrick Payton. He and editor Walt Bodie now head the staff of 27 employees, though they have hired a new sales director from Doubleday. "Once I talk to agents and authors and explain why we're here and where we're going, they don't want to leave," Payton continued. "Harold Pinter said he wants to leave. Two conversations later he's here." This fall Grove will publish Pinter's only novel, *The Dwarfs*, written in the '50s then forgotten in a drawer. "Grove will go back to the Grove of old and then blossom from there. It's going to be a small house with interesting and prestigious authors and with first-time authors." In recent years the house has taken on novelists Kathy Acker and Dennis Cooper, who belong to the iconoclastic tradition, and it still has about

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